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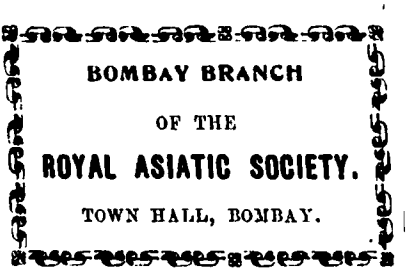

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PLAIN SPEAKING.

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BY THE AUTHOR OF

"JOHN HALIFAX, GENTLEMAN,"

&c., &c.

IN ONE VOLUME.

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PRELIMINARY.

It has been remarked, "You may say anything, to anybody, if you only know *how* to say it." That is, with kindliness, good temper, and calm justice: without bumptiousness, and above all, free from the smallest suspicion of envy, malice, and all uncharitableness. Under such conditions, the act of speaking one's mind, usually so obnoxious, is shorn of much of its harmfulness; and fault-finding becomes less a weapon of offence than a surgeon's lancet, used not for injury, but cure.

Therefore, if I say somewhat hard things, I beg my readers to believe that it is not out of a hard heart, careless of giving pain, but a sad

heart, knowing that pain must be given, and that, if bitter truths need to be spoken, they are better spoken by an optimist than a pessimist: by a straightforward Christian woman than by a cynic or a laughing philosopher.

Also let me wholly disclaim intentional personalities. If there be a cap which fits anyone, and he likes to put it on his own head, and fly into a passion about it, that is his fault, not mine. I accuse no one;—let people's own consciences accuse themselves. If by looking into this silent glass, they see their own image, and go away, not forgetting but remembering and amending it—for our moral beauty or ugliness depends very much upon ourselves—then this Plain Speaking of mine will be no offence, nor shall I have spoken altogether in vain.

THE TIDE AT THE FLOOD.

THE TIDE AT THE FLOOD.

"There is a tide in the affairs of men
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune."

"WHY, this is like a bit out of 'Cranford,'" said I to a friend as we came out into the clear winter twilight, from a house where she had taken me to pay a call.

"Yes; Mrs. Gaskell would have made a charming picture out of that cosy little parlour, with Miss Sarah sitting alone there, so round and fat and comfortable-looking."

"Pretty, too," interposed I; "she must have been pretty when she was young."

"I believe she was. What a pity she has nothing and nobody dear to devote herself to, except that parrot! But the bird is almost as

good to her as a child, and as troublesome." (My friend does not believe in the delightfulness of children). "And Miss Phillis makes as much of the parrot as her sister. I wish you had seen Miss Phillis; but she is always out of afternoons."

It seemed at the other end of the town lived an old gentleman, very helpless and infirm, whom Miss Phillis for years had gone to see every day, spending an hour or two in reading or talking to him.

"In summer I often used to meet her walking beside his Bath-chair. She is not at all like Miss Sarah, but very tall and thin, and decidedly active for her years. This winter I hear poor Mr. White cannot go out at all, but Miss Phillis never misses a day in going to see him."

"Is he a relation?"

"Oh, no; only a very old friend. An old bachelor, too—quite solitary. People do say—have said it any time these thirty years—that he had better have married Miss Phillis,

and that she would not have objected; but one never knows the truth of these things. They have been most steady, life-long friends, anyhow."

Here, truly, was a chapter out of "Cranford," or out of human life generally. Once I had myself chanced to see Mr. White—a funny little old man in a brown Brutus wig—it was difficult to make a sentimental hero of him. Still——

"I have always been rather fond of Miss Phillis," continued my friend. "She would have made a good man's fireside very bright. Perhaps Mr. White was one of those who are always missing their chances, who cannot 'take the tide at the flood.' If so, it was a pity. So many let happiness slip by them, and regret it when too late. Not that I am aware of Miss Phillis's regretting anything. She is a very cheerful-minded woman, and is invaluable now to old Mr. White."

We were neither of us in a moralising mood, being also cheerful-minded women, and bent

on enjoying as much as possible our brief winter holiday—"gently but kindly," like our own advancing age—so the conversation dropped.

Since, however, it has often recurred to me, how very common is this fatal peculiarity of not being able to "take the tide at the flood," especially in love affairs. That affair of Miss Phillis and Mr. White may never have existed at all, except in the imagination of their friends; but I have known several other instances in which a little honest rashness would have been the best wisdom.

One case for instance. They were a young couple—playfellows from childhood. All their friends were agreeable to and expecting their engagement; nay, waiting, somewhat anxiously, for the gentleman to make up his mind and say the final word, which from pure shyness he delayed doing. At last, one Sunday—the young lady was going away from home on Monday—he determined to speak—during their usual evening walk from church. But—

"I'll go to church with you to-night," said an unconscious, well-intentioned friend. Alas! "two is company, three is none." The proposal was not made—was never made. Three days after the lady accepted a long-persistent suitor, who years before had made up *his* mind—and declared it. No hearts were broken, apparently. She married, but her old playfellow is a bachelor still. He comes now and then to see her, romps with her children, plays chess with her husband, and does not look at all miserable. But perhaps, when he goes back to his handsome empty house, he wishes things had been a little different.

However, love, if it be the heart of existence constitutes only a small portion of it externally, to a man at least. On many other matters besides love matters this inability to take the tide at the flood is fatal. How many a man owes his whole success in life to the power of being able to see the golden moment and catch it ere it flies! "All things come alike to all." That is (with very rare exceptions), every man has a

certain number of chances; the distinction between success and failure is that one grasps his chance, another lets it slip by. An unanswered letter, an appointment broken, a train missed, may, for all we know, change the colour of our whole existence. All the more so because we do *not* know; until, looking back, we see upon what trivial things—mere accidents apparently—hinged the most important events of our lives. A situation applied for at once, and gained "just at the nick of time;" a first invitation accepted, not neglected; a business letter answered without delay; an appointment kept, with trouble and pains, perhaps, yet still kept; these small things have many a time proved the key-stone of the arch on which a young man has built his fortunes. "Only a quarter of an hour!" said an old fellow to a young one who was apologising carelessly for having kept him waiting thus long. "My friend, to that quarter of an hour I owe everything in life!"

Between the courage which seizes an oppor-

tunity and the sanguine rashness which snatches at everything and grasps nothing, is as wide a difference as between bravery and foolhardiness.

Sometimes, however, one may make a mistake. A lady once told me how she stood before a post-office with a letter in her hand—a momentous letter, written on the impulse of the moment, and with a strong conscientious desire to do the right, all the more because to do it was very painful—how twice, three times, she seemed to feel some invisible hand restraining her own, how she looked helplessly up to the silent sunset sky—then with a sort of desperation, dropped the letter into the box—and repented it to her dying day.

But these difficult crises seldom happen. On the whole, far more harm is done by irresolution than by precipitation. The feeble man who never can make up his mind, who lets chance after chance go past him, is always a little too late for everything, and never knows that kindly Fortune has touched him

till he catches the last sad sweep of her garment as she glides by—for ever!—the misery which this man creates, and inflicts—for it is a fallacy that anyone can be nobody's enemy but his own—is, in the aggregate, much greater than that caused by the strong bad man. Him we recognise at once, and against him we can protect ourselves a little; against the other we cannot protect ourselves at all. Our very pity takes up arms against our judgment. For, alas! we know the certain end—

> "He that will not when he may,
> When he would he shall have nay."

Only for a single hopeful minute is the tide at the flood; once turned, it has turned for ever, and

> "Leaves him at eve on the bleak shore alone."

All business men and women—for women require to be good "men of business" too in this our day—know that the aptitude for seeing the right moment to do a thing, and

the power to do it, without rashness, but also without delay, is a vital necessity of success—success in anything. He who puts off till to-morrow what can be done—or ought to be done—to-day, is the most hopeless of individuals in any position where regular systematic work is required. Hopeless as a clerk or servant, but more fatal still as master. Or as mistress—for the real heart of a family is almost always the mistress. If *she* cannot take the tide at the flood, judge the fittest moment for domestic decisions of all kinds, and carry them out, woe betide her! There may be no actual shipwreck, but her household barque will be a very helpless, helmless vessel at best.

This habit of dilatoriness and indecision is much of it mere habit, the habit of imitation, which the youngers are so ready to catch from the elders. Therefore, even the child cannot be too early taught, first the necessity of making up one's mind, and then of acting upon it. The trick of "hanging about," of

wasting minute after minute, hour after hour, in work as in play—for idlers never even play conscientiously—is often acquired in mere infancy, and never got rid of to the end of life. What is in the boy or girl pure carelessness, becomes in the man or woman a confirmed peculiarity, which haunts them like a curse, causing no end of misery to themselves and all belonging to them.

For we know our gains and achievements; our losses, our failures, we never fully know. But we may dimly guess at them, by our despair over some application thrown aside and neglected, till the lost chance of benefiting ourselves or our neighbour can never be recalled; our remorse over an unanswered letter, when the writer has suddenly gone whither no kindly word can reach him any more; our regret over cordial visits left unpaid, and pleasant meetings unvalued, till friendship, worn out, dies a natural death, or burns itself to ashes like a fire without fresh coals. Then we may lay the blame on

Providence, luck, circumstances; anything or anybody except the true sinner—ourselves.

"We cannot help it," we plead, and after a certain time we really cannot help it. There is a disease called paralysis of the will, an actual physical disease, though its results are moral, and everyone who cultivates, or rather does not strive with all his might to eradicate, the habit of indecision, lays himself open thereto. A baby who knows its own mind, and stretches out the little impetuous hand, quite certain it is the doll and not the waggon that it wants to play with, and eager to snatch it, without wasting a minute—is a creature possessing a quality not to be despised but encouraged. The gift of being able to know exactly what one wants, and the strength to use all lawful methods to get it, is one of the greatest blessings that can fall to the lot of a human being. Let us, who are parents, try by all conceivable means to secure it to our children.

For the young can learn; the old seldom

can. "Redeeming the time because the days are evil" is very difficult when the days have become "evil;" when the glow has gone out of life, and instead of the rosy flush of hope the grey twilight of endurance settles over all things; when we smile at "taking the tide at the flood," knowing that no more tides will ever come, for us at least;—but they may for our descendants.

Let us teach them, whether or not we have learnt the lesson ourselves, "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with all thy might." And do it *at the time*. Not to-morrow, or the day after, or by-and-by when in the mood for it, but at once, at the moment when it presents itself to be done. For the tide will turn, and you never know the moment of its turning. Be clear-sighted, cautious, prudent,—but, after that, be decided. Make up your mind slowly and carefully; but having made it up, act upon it. Do not—

> "Linger shivering on the brink,
> And fear to launch away."

Take the tide at the flood; plunge boldly in; do your best, and trust the rest.

There is an old English verse, out of a love poem, I think; but it applies to many another crisis in life besides love—

> "He either fears his fate too much,
> Or his deserts are small,
> Who dare not put it to the touch,
> To win or lose it all."

And without defending either folly, recklessness, or rashness, I think we may safely say that the man who *dare* "put it to the touch" is the man most likely to have his fate in his own hands. Whatever happens to him, he will at least have the consolation of knowing that he has lost nothing through weakness or delay. Storms may come—and wrecks too: but at any rate he is a brave sailor, ready to fight with destiny. He has not allowed himself to rot stranded on a lee-shore;—he has taken the tide at the flood, and wheresover it bears him, he has done his best.

VICTIMS AND VICTIMISERS.

VICTIMS AND VICTIMISERS.

THE "noble army of martyrs" sounds very fine; and how many people are, or believe they are, of that goodly company! Whether a large proportion might not wholesomely be deposed thence, and relegated to the uninteresting ranks of mere victims, feeble and cowardly, I should not like to say. But the pride of martyrdom consoles them so much in their sufferings that it would be almost a pity to deprive them thereof, or to suggest that the true martyr carefully covers his hair-shirt with a velvet gown, and presents a placid and ever cheerful countenance to all beholders, in spite of the vulture gnawing at his heart.

It is for the benefit of these vultures, and with the hope of strangling some of them, that this chapter is written.

In the first place I would like to ask how much ought we to allow ourselves to suffer? I mean, not the inevitable sufferings sent, or permitted, by God, but those inflicted on us by our fellow-mortals—by far the most numerous, and the hardest to bear.

Christianity bases a great deal of its theology on the doctrine of non-resistance. "If a man smite thee on the one cheek, offer him the other; if he take away thy cloak, let him have thy coat also." A great mystery—so great that I cannot help believing translators must be at fault somehow, or (if it be not heresy to say this), that Christ's disciples in repeating their Master's words somewhat misconstrued them.

It may be also that the command, "Resist not evil," is only meant for an age when evil was so rampant that it could not be resisted, except by the Divine teaching of self-sacrifice,

which was then so new, and so startingly opposite to anything the heathen world had ever known. Still the malediction, "Offences must come, but woe be to them through whom the offence cometh," is sufficiently strong to warrant us in offering a word or two on the other side, the side of the victims against the victimisers.

Most aggravating, to use no higher term, is it sometimes to notice how the good of this world are oppressed by the bad, the cheerful and amiable by the sour-tempered, the unselfish by the selfish, the careful by the careless or prodigal. Not a week, not a day passes that the more generous of us do not long to rescue some of these poor victims out of the hands of their tormentors, acting St. George and the Dragon over again, or becoming a modern Perseus for a new Andromeda. Only, alas! the sufferers are seldom young and attractive, and the persecutors often are so.

Take, for instance, the case of nervous

invalids. These are not seldom the most pathetically fascinating of women, whom, for a time at least, all the men of their acquaintance are delighted to serve; who frequently win excellent, devoted husbands, and make slaves and martyrs of them for life.

The subtle charm of helplessness dominates most strongly over the largest and most generous of natures. A truly noble man unconsciously protects, and loves that which he protects. The extent to which such a one is victimised by a weak, selfish, egotistical invalid, or quasi-invalid—for the real invalids are sometimes the most patient, unselfish, and unexacting of human beings—is all but incredible, and wholly pitiable.

More so, I think, than when the case is reversed, because it seems to be woman's natural *métier* to be somebody's slave all her life. But with men who have, and ought to have, a wider horizon, a larger duty, including not only the family but the world, it is, even granting all the tenderness due from the strong

to the weak, rather hard to be tied to the triumphant chariot wheels, *i.e.*, the Bath-chair, of a charming, interesting, but *exigeante* valetudinarian, to whom the one golden rule for invalids, "Suffer as silently, and make others suffer as little, as you can," is a dead letter.

Possibly these victimisers, being also sufferers, should be handled more gently than another sort, who have no excuse at all.

Most families possess, near or remote, some member who is a perpetual "root of bitterness springing up to trouble them." Not necessarily a wicked, but a decidedly unpleasant person; weak in many points, but excellent at fault-finding and mischief-making; always getting into hot water and dragging other people after; in disposition touchy, exacting, or morose. In short, the sort of individual whom all would gladly escape from, but being unfortunately "one of the family," they, the family, are bound to put up with, and do so, with a patience that is almost miraculous. Outsiders,

too, for their sakes, imitate them, treating the obnoxious party with preternatural politeness, "making love to the devil" as I have heard it put, and propitiating him or her with much greater care than would be necessary towards the more agreeable relatives. For peace's sake, all sorts of inconveniences are borne, all manner of lies—white lies—told, until life becomes, when not an actual endurance, a long hypocrisy.

Now, is this right? Would it not be much more right for the victims to take up arms against the victimiser and say plainly, "You are an intolerable nuisance. It is not fair that the many should suffer for one. The family—a whole family—shall not be made miserable by you any longer. You must either mend your ways, or you must be got rid of, somehow."

Ay, and this should be done; in the kindest and most prudent way, of course, but decidedly done. If all the "roots of bitterness" we know of were "grubbed up," or at least safely planted out, what a blessing it would

be! Many people, intolerable at home, are quite pleasant and charming abroad, being forced then to exercise with strangers the self-control that they did not care to use in the bosom of their family. Surely some new philanthropist might invent asylums for the ill-tempered, the sulky, the malicious and egotistical—egotism is always a kind of madness, and often the forerunner of it. At any rate, surely every family ought to do its best to get rid of any obnoxious element which torments and harms the rest. Or failing that, it ought to do as the bees in a hive, and cover up the corrupting nuisance with the smooth wax of polite but remorseless indifference, till its injuriousness is neutralised as much as possible. If we could but convince tender-conscienced folk—apt to be ridden over rough-shod by those who have no conscience at all—that the incurable evils of life being so great, to sit down and tamely endure a curable evil is worse than foolish—wrong!

I do not include among these nuisances the merely bad-tempered, because, anomaly as it sounds, many bad-tempered people are exceeding good. Their besetting sin is often a purely physical thing, arising from nervous irritability or other controllable physical cause, which produces a general *malaise* that causes them to suffer in themselves quite as they make others suffer. If they have the sense to see this and rule themselves accordingly, they deserve sympathy, even in midst of condemnation. But if they say, "I can't help it. It's me, and you must put up with it!" or, still worse, if, like drunkards and madmen, who are always accusing other people of being mad or drunk, they imagine everybody is in league against them, and accuse cheerful, innocent hearts of being haunted by the ugly black shadows that so often cloud their own, then let us waste on them no pity—they merit none. We cannot cure them, we must endure them; still let us at least escape from them, and

help others to escape, in every possible way.

It is a hard thing to say, but some of the cruellest of victimisers are the people who are supposed to be devotedly attached to their victims. As perhaps they are, but not in a right way. Instead of a safe and tender embrace, they clutch at these unfortunates with the strangling clasp of an octopus, fancying they love them, when in fact they only love themselves. Many people like well enough to be loved; they keenly enjoy the honour and glory of showing to the world that they are loved. But of love itself, and of loving—I give the word its widest interpretation—they are absolutely incapable. That deep, faithful, reverent passion, which can project itself out of itself and devote its whole powers, silently or openly, to the service of another—of this they have not the remotest idea. Jealous, exacting; demanding sacrifices and making none; for ever thinking, not "Do I love you?" but "Do you love me?" and

always suspecting that love to be less than they deserve—such "lovers," be they men or women—and I must confess that they are oftenest women—are the greatest nuisances that their luckless objects of attachment can be plagued with. Often they force their victims to wish ardently that instead of loving they would take to hating, or at any rate to wholesome indifference.

People write of the torments of unrequited love; but a far greater torment is it to be pursued by the egotistical affection of some one—whether friend or relative—who worries your life out with fussy anxiety over your health, who, under colour of aiding you, meddles fatally in all your affairs, and, while calling himself (or herself) your dearest friend, tries to separate you from every other friend you have. Surely no moment of pity, or even gratitude for unasked favours, ought to prevent such victims from resolutely throwing off the victimisers and escaping from their affectionate clutches by every means that Christian charity allows. There are a number

of women, old and young, who go about the world bestowing their unoccupied hearts upon their own sex or the other, rushing into vehement sentimental friendships or loves which are as trying to one side as ridiculous on the other. We constantly see some kindly, respectable Sindbad staggering on under the enforced embrace of a devoted friend or attached relative, a veritable Old Man of the Sea, unto whom we long to say, "Throw him off, and let him find his own feet and manage his own affairs!" as in nine cases out of ten he would. People can quite well walk alone, only it is so much easier to be carried.

Besides the compelled, inevitable victims, it is sad to see what a number of well-meaning folk tacitly, and quite unnecessarily, victimise themselves. These are the people who are always afraid of offending others; who imagine that somebody will expect something —an invitation, a visit, a letter, and be much annoyed at not getting it. Consequently, they are for ever doing things they do not want to

do, for fear of vexing folk who are not vexed at all—or making endless apologies to people who never required them, and who perhaps have no time to think about either the thing or the person, and it was only the uneasy egotism of the other individual which supposed they did.

For the dread of giving offence, like the habit of taking it, springs quite as often from self-esteem as from sensitiveness. Vain, self-engrossed people are apt to exaggerate the importance they are to other people, and so to have a nervous terror of offending them; whereas a man of single mind, who does not trouble himself much about himself, never takes offence, and is therefore not apt to imagine he has given any. He goes straight on, turning neither to the right nor the left, does the best thing, so far as he sees it, and the kindly thing, whenever it lies in his power; but beyond that he does not afflict himself much as to what people think of him or expect of him. If they expect what they

had no right to expect, exact more than they are justified in requiring, above all, take offence where he had no intention of giving any, then he altogether refuses to be victimised. He may make no great stir and present no obnoxious front — indeed, probably he considers the matter too small to fight about — but the victimisers can make nothing of him. He calmly goes on his way, "worrying" neither himself nor his neighbour. Life is too short for tempests in tea-pots, or indeed for any other unnecessary storm: we must just do our duty, and let it alone.

But in this great question of doing one's duty, I think we cannot too sharply draw the line between what really is our duty and what other people choose to suppose it is; probably each person having a different opinion on the subject. We are apt to start in life with a grand idea of self-sacrifice and an heroic sense of the joy of it. Ay, and there is a joy, deeper than the selfish can ever understand, delight keener than the pleasure-loving can

ever know, in spending and being spent for our best-beloved, or even in the mere abstract help of the good and defence of the miserable —that "enthusiasm of humanity," as a great writer called it, which is at the heart of all religion, the love of man springing from the love of God.

Yet, alas! ere long we come to learn that there are sacrifices which turn out to be sheer mistakes, ruining ourselves and profiting nobody; that unselfishness, carried to an extreme, only makes other people selfish; that "the fear of man bringeth a snare;" and that to make one's whole life miserable through a weak dread of offending this person, who has no right to be offended, or of not doing one's duty to that person, who has the very smallest claim to any duty at all, is—well! I will not call it wrong, because it is a failing that leans to virtue's side—but it is simply silly.

To withstand evil is quite as necessary as to do good. And if we withstand it for others, why not for ourselves? Every time that we

weakly suffer a needless wrong, we abet and encourage the inflictor in perpetrating it. By becoming passive and uncomplaining victims, we tacitly injure the victimisers. They can but kill our bodies, as they sometimes do by most amiable and unconscious murder, slow and sure; but we may kill their souls, by allowing them, unresisted, to go on in some course of conduct which must result in their gradual deterioration and moral death. It may be a theory, startling enough to some people, but warranted by a good long observation of life, if I say that I believe one-half of the self-sacrifices of this world—the endless instances we see in which the good are immolated to the bad, the weak to the strong, the self-forgetting to the exacting and tyrannical —spring not from heroism but cowardice.

We have not too many angels in this world, and we know little enough of the angelic host above: but the angel who always most attracted my youthful imagination, was Saint Michael, the strong, the warlike, the wrestler with the

powers of evil. That we should so wrestle with evil, even to our last breath, is as necessary as that we should cling to good. And, lovely as Love may be, there is another, a blindfold Woman with balance and scales, still more beautiful. Justice is a great deal more difficult than Mercy to find, and rarer.

She, I think, would say to these victims, hopeless victims many, for they are not only too weak to struggle against, but they actually love their victimisers: Pause and consider whether there is not something beyond and above either love or hatred, egoism or altruism —that sense of simple right and wrong, which, when not corrupted or set aside, is inherent in every human soul. Fear God, and have no other fear. Serve God, and every other service will sink into its right proportions. "For one is your Master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren."

And if we really are brethren let us try to be neither victims nor victimisers.

"ODD" PEOPLE.

"ODD" PEOPLE.

"For ye suffer fools gladly."

YES, because we recognise them as fools; and there is in our human nature a certain Pharisaical element which hugs itself in the thought that we are not "as other men are." Therefore we regard them and their folly with a self-contented, and not unkindly pity. We understand them and put up with them, and it soothes our vanity to feel how very much we are above them.

But these others, the "odd" people, are somewhat different. We do not understand them; they keep us always in an uneasy uncertainty as to whether we ought to respect or despise them; whether they are inferior or superior

to ourselves. Consequently we are to them often unjust, and always untender. They puzzle us, these people whom we designate as "unlike other people" (that is, unlike ourselves and our charming and highly respectable neighbours); whose motives we do not comprehend, and whose actions we can never quite calculate upon: who are apparently a law unto themselves, independent of us; who do not look up to us, nay, we rather suspect they look down upon us, or are at least calmly indifferent to us, and consequently more irritating a thousand times than the obvious and confessed fools.

An odd person. How often one hears the term, and generally in a tone of depreciation, as if it implied a misfortune or a disgrace, or both. Which it does, when the oddity is not natural but artificial, as is frequently the case. Of all forms of egotism, that of being intentionally peculiar is the most pitiful. Real eccentricity is always rather a misfortune;—assumed eccentricity is a folly—if not a crime.

The man who is always putting himself in an attitude, physical or moral, in order that the world may stare at him; striving to make himself different from other folks under the delusion that difference constitutes superiority —such a man merits, and generally gets, only contempt. He who, not from consciousness but conceit, sets himself against the tide of public opinion, deserves to be swept away by it, as most commonly he is, in a whirl of just derision.

Quite different is the case of one who is neither a fool nor an egotist, but merely "odd," born such, or made such by inevitable, and often rather sad circumstances and habits of life. And it is for these, worthy sometimes of much sympathy, respect and tenderness, never certainly of contempt, that I wish to say a word.

I know a family who, having possessed a tolerable amount of brains in itself for more than one generation, had an over-weening admiration for the same, and got into a habit

of calling all commonplace, ordinary people, "chuckie-stanes." Every Scotch schoolboy knows the word. It describes exactly those people exactly like everybody else, whom one is constantly meeting in society, and without whom society could not get on at all, for they make a sort of comfortable background to the other people, who are *not* like everybody else.

But in all surface judgments and unkindly criticisms must be a degree of injustice. No one is really a "chuckie-stane." Every human being has his own individuality, small or large, his salient and interesting points, quite distinct from his neighbours, if only his neighbours will take the trouble to find them out. One often hears the remark, especially from the young, that such a person is "a bore," and such a house is "the dullest house possible." For myself, I can only say, I wonder where the "dull houses" are, and where the "bores" go to! since I never succeed in finding either. Only once I remember a feeling of despair in having

for two mortal hours the companionship of a not brilliant young farmer; but I plunged him at once into sheep and turnips, when he became so enthusiastic and intelligent that I gained from him information on agricultural subjects which will last me to the end of my days.

Very few people are absolutely uninteresting, except those that are unreal. A fool is bearable, a humbug never.

Now "odd" people, whatever they are, are certainly not humbugs. Nor are they necessarily bad people—quite the contrary. Society, much as it dislikes them, is forced to allow this. Many men and women whom others stigmatise as "so very peculiar," are, the latter often confess, not worse, but much better, than themselves; capable of acts of heroism which they know they would shrink from, and of endurance which they would much rather admire than imitate. But then they are such odd people!

How? In what does their oddity consist?

Generally, their detractors cannot exactly say.

The sin mostly resolves itself into certain peculiarities of manner or quaintnesses of dress; an original way of looking at things, and a fearless fashion of judging them; independence of, or indifference to, the innumerable small nothings which make the sum of what the world considers everything worth living for, worth dying for, but which these odd people do not consider of any importance at all. Therefore the world is offended with them, and condemns them with a severity scarcely commensurate to their deserts.

Especially in things most apparent outside—their manners and their clothing.

Now, far be it from me to aver that either of these is of no consequence. Dress especially, as the "outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace," is of the utmost consequence. Those who, by neglecting it, make themselves singular in the eyes of strangers, or unpleasant in those of friends, are strongly to blame.

But not less so are the people who wear out their own lives, and those of others, by fidgeting over trifles—bemoaning a misfitting coat or an unbecoming bonnet, and behaving as if the world had come to an end on account of a speck on a boot or a small rent in a gown. There is a proportion in things. Those who worry themselves to death, and others too, over minute wrongs and errors, commit a still greater wrong and overlook a much more serious error. How many of us would prefer to dine upon potatoes and salt, and dress in a sack with sleeve-holes, rather than be ceaselessly tormented, with the best of intentions, about what we eat, drink, and put on? "Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"

Yes; but society must have its meat and also its raiment, and that in the best and most decorous form which the general opinion of its members considers as such. To set one's self rampantly against this code of unwritten law is, when not wrong, simply foolish. The

obnoxious plebeian who insisted on vindicating that "a man's a man for a' that," by presenting himself at a patrician dinner in rough morning garb; the conceited young artist, who appeared so picturesque—and so snobbish—at a full-dress assembly in his velvet painting-coat, were certainly odd people; but their oddity was pure silliness—neither grand nor heroic in the least. Nor, I must say, can I consider much wiser the ladies, young and old, whom I see yearly at private views, dressed not like the ordinary gentlewomen of the day, but just as if they had "stepped out of a picture;" only the pictures they choose to step out of are not always the most beautiful—often the most *bizarre* of their kind.

As a general rule, any style of dress, whether an exaggeration of the fashion of the time or a divergence from it, which is so different from other people's as to make them turn round and look at it, is a mistake. This sort of eccentricity I do not defend. But I do defend the right of every man and woman to dress him-

self and herself in their own way; that is, the way which they find most comfortable, suitable, and tasteful, provided it is not glaringly obnoxious to the community at large.

A gentleman who, hating the much-abused but still-endured chimney-pot hat, persists in going through life with his noble brows shaded by a wide-awake; a lady who has manfully resisted deformity in the shape of tight stays and high-heeled boots, has held out successfully against hoop-petticoats and dresses tied up like umbrellas, who declined equally to smother her fresh young face under a coal-scuttle bonnet, or to bare her poor old cheeks to sun and wind and critical observation by a small stringless hat, good neither for use nor ornament—such people may be set down as "odd;" but they are neither culpable nor contemptible. They do what they consider right and best for themselves; and what possible harm do they do to other people?

Besides—though this is no excuse for all oddities, but it is for some—the chances are,

that they are people no longer young, who have learnt the true value of life and the true proportions of things much better than their accusers or criticisers. Possibly, too, they are busy people, who have many other things to think of than themselves and their clothes. It is the young, the idle, the small-minded, who are most prone to vex themselves about petty and outside things. As years advance and interests widen, we see with larger eyes, and refuse to let minute evils destroy in us and in those dear to us, that equal mind which, accepting life as a whole, in all its earnestness and reality, its beauty and sadness combined—weighs calmly and strikes bravely the balance of good and ill.

Perfection even in the humblest and commonest details is to be striven after, but not to the sacrifice of higher and better things. I have known a young lady sulk through half a ball because her dress was not quite as tight-fitting as the mode exacted; and an elderly gentleman make a happy family party miser-

able for a whole dinner-time because there chanced to be too much salt in the soup. Such terribly "even" folk as these, drive one to appreciate those that are "odd."

The world still contains many who persist in tithing mint, anise, and cummin, and neglecting "wisdom, justice, and the weightier matters of the law." It is they who are hardest upon the odd people. Their minds, absorbed in the mint, anise, and cummin of existence, cannot take in the condition, intellectual and moral, of a person upon whom those "weightier matters" weigh so heavily that he is prone to overlook lesser matters. He objects to be tied and bound by certain narrow social laws, which, indeed, being of no real importance, he refuses to consider laws at all. Therefore he is set down as a law-breaker, laughed at as eccentric, or abused as conceited, when probably there is in him not an atom of either conceit or egotism, and his only eccentricity consists in the fact that his own large nature cannot com-

prehend the exceeding smallness of other people's. He gives Tom, Dick, and Harry credit for the same quick sympathies, high aims, and earnest purposes that he has himself, and is altogether puzzled to find in them nothing of the kind. They can no more understand him than if he spoke to them in Chinese. They only think him "a rather odd sort of person"—smile at him and turn away. So he "shuts up"—to use a phrase out of that elegant slang which they are far more adepts at than he—and Tom, Dick, and Harry hate him for evermore, with the relentless animosity of small souls towards another soul, into whose depths they cannot in the least penetrate, but sometimes suspect it to be a little deeper and larger than their own.

And occasionally, rather to their annoyance, the fact is discovered, even by the purblind world.

Take, for instance, that very "odd" person —Don Quixote—whom successive generations

have laughed at as a mere fool; but this generation begins to see in the poor old knight a pathetic type of that ideal Christian chivalry which spends itself in succouring the weak and oppressed, which believes the best of every human being, and is only led astray by its expectation of finding in others the purity, truthfulness, honour, and unselfishness which are to itself as natural as the air it breathes. But they are not the natural atmosphere of society, which accordingly sets down those who practise these virtues—who have a high ideal of life, and strive through endless difficulties and deficiencies to carry it out—as "Quixotic," or, at best, rather "odd" people. Yet, is it not they who influence the world? who do a daring act of generosity or heroism, while others are only thinking about it; and perpetrate philanthropic follies with such success that those who would utterly have scouted them had they failed, now praise them as possessing the utmost wisdom and most admirable common sense?

Again, many are odd simply because they are independent. That weak gregariousness which is content to "follow the multitude to do evil" (or good, as it happens, and often the chances are pretty equal both ways), is not possible to them. They must think, speak, and act for themselves. And there is something in their natures which makes them a law unto themselves, without breaking any other rational laws. The bondage of conventionality—a stronghold and safeguard to feebler folk—is to them unnecessary and irksome. They mean to do the right, and they do it, but they cannot submit to the trammels of mere convenience or expediency. Being quite sure of their own minds, and quite strong enough to carry out their own purposes, they prefer to do so, without troubling themselves very much about what others think of them. Having a much larger bump of self-esteem, or self-respect, than of love of approbation, outside opinion does not weigh with them as it does with weaker

people, and they go calmly upon their way without knowing or asking what are their neighbours' feelings towards them.

Therefore their neighbours, seeing actions, but not motives, and being as ignorant of results as they are of causes, often pronounce upon them the rashest judgments, denouncing the quiet indifference of true greatness as petty vanity, and the naturalness of a pure heart and simple mind as mere affectation. For to the worldly unworldliness is so incredible, to the bad goodness is so impossible, that they will believe anything sooner than believe in either. Anyone whose ideal of life is above the ordinary standard, and who persists in carrying it out after a fashion incomprehensible to society in general, is sure to be denounced by society as "singular"—or worse.

It always was so, and always will be. That excellent Italian gentleman—I forget his name—who felt it necessary to apologise for Michael Angelo's manners, doubtlessly con-

sidered the old sculptor as an exceedingly "odd" person. Odder still the man must have been thought by many an elegant Florentine, when, for some mere crotchet about the abolition of the republic, he abruptly quitted Florence and all his advantages there; nor ever returned, even though leaving unfinished those works which still remain unfinished in the Mausoleum of the Medici—monuments of the obstinacy, or conscientiousness, or whatever you like to call it, of a mere artist, who set his individual opinion and will in opposition to the highest power in the land.

Poor old fellow, with his grim, saturnine face and broken nose! How very "peculiar" he must have appeared to his contemporaries! One wonders if anyone, even Vittoria Colonna, had the sense to see into the deep heart of him, with all its greatness, sadness, and tenderness. There is a Pietà of his at Genoa, and another at St. Peter's, in which the Virgin Mother's gaze upon her dead Son lying across

her lap, seems to express all the motherhood, and all the grief for the dead since the foundation of the world. And yet the sculptor might have been rough enough, and eccentric enough, outside; and his friend might have been quite excusable in craving pardon for his "manners."

But there are cases in which eccentricity requires more than apology—a rebuke. Those peculiarities which cause people to become a nuisance or an injury to other people, such as unpunctuality as to time, neglect or inaccuracy in business matters, and in all those minor necessities or courtesies of life which make it smooth and sweet; these failings, from whatever cause they spring, ought, even if pardoned, not to be pardoned without protest. They are wrong in themselves, and no argument or apology will make them right. The man who breaks his appointments, forgets his social engagements, leaves his letters unanswered and promises unfulfilled, is not merely an "odd" but a very erring individual; and if he shelters himself for this breach of every-day

duties and courtesies by the notion that he is superior to them, deserves not excuses, but sharp condemnation.

Not so the peculiarities which harm nobody, and are not culpable in themselves, though they may seem so to the "chuckie-stanes" of society, who are afraid of anything which differs from their own smooth roundness. These failings, more worthy of respectful tenderness than of blame or contempt—who can tell the causes from which they sprang? What human being knows so entirely his fellow-creature's inner and outer life that he dare pronounce upon crotchety habits, peculiar manners of dress, eccentric ways of life or modes of thought, which may have resulted from the unrecorded but never obliterated history of years? It is mostly the old who are "odd," and when the young laugh at them, how do they know that they are not laughing at what may be their own fate one day? Many a peculiarity may have sprung from some warped nobility of nature,

many an eccentricity may have originated in the silent tragedy of a life-time.

Of necessity, "odd" people are solitary people. They may dwell in a crowd, and do their duty in a large family, but neither the crowd nor the family understand them; and they know it. They do not always feel it—that is, not to the extent of keen suffering, for their very "oddity" makes them sufficient to themselves, and they have ceased to expect the sympathy which they know they cannot get. Still, at one time, probably they did expect it. That "pernickity" old maid, whom her nieces devoutly hope they may never resemble, may have been the "odd" one—but the thoughtful and earnest one—in a tribe of light-minded sisters, who danced and dressed, flirted and married, while she—who herself might possibly have wished to marry once upon a time, never did marry, but has lived her lonely, self-contained life from then till now, and will live it to the end. That man, who was once a gay young bachelor,

and is now a grim old bachelor—not positively disagreeable, but very peculiar, with all sorts of queer notions of his own, may have been, though the world little guesses it, a thoroughly disappointed man; beginning life with a grand ideal of ambition or philanthropy, striving hard to make himself, or to mend the world, or both, and finding that the task is something

> "Like one who strives in little boat
> To tug to him the ship afloat."

And so, though he has escaped being swamped, he at last gives up the vain struggle, folds his arms, and lets himself float mournfully on with the ebbing tide.

For the tide of life is almost sure to be at its ebb with those whom we call "odd" people. Therefore we ask for them, not exactly compassion—they seldom need it, and would scorn to ask it for themselves—but that tenderness which is allied to reverence, and shows itself as such. Young people have, in a sense, no right to be odd. They have plenty of years

before them, and will meet in the world enough attrition to rub down their angles, and make them polished and pleasant to all beholders. Early singularities are generally mere affectations. But when time has brought to most of us the sad "too late," which in many things more or less we all must find, the case is a little different. Then it becomes the generation still advancing to show that which is just passing away, tenderness, consideration, and respect, even in spite of many harmless weaknesses.

For they know themselves as none other can ever know them; except God. Others see their failures; but He saw how they struggled, and conquered sometimes. Others behold their gains and triumphs; they have to sit night and day face to face with their perpetual losses. The world distinguishes, shrewdly enough, all they have done, or not done; they themselves only know what they meant to do and how far they have succeeded. If they are "odd," that is, if having strong

individualities, they are not afraid or ashamed to show them, to speak fearlessly, to act independently, or possibly, plunging into the other extreme, to sink into morbid silence and neither look nor speak at all—what marvel? Better this than to be exactly like everybody else, and go through life as evenly and as uselessly as a chuckie-stane.

For, undoubtedly, odd people have their consolations.

In the first place they are quite sure not to be weak people. Every one with a marked individuality has always this one great blessing —he can stand alone. In his pleasures and his pains he is sufficient to himself, and if he does not get sympathy, he can generally do without it. Also, "peculiar" people, though not attractive to the many, by the few who do love them are sure to be loved very deeply, as we are apt to love those who have strong salient points, and in whom there is a good deal to get over. And, even if unloved, they have generally great capacity of loving; a

higher and, it may be, a safer thing. For affection that rests on another's love often leans on a broken reed; love which rests on itself is founded on a rock, and cannot be moved. The waves may lash, the winds may rave around it; but there it is, and there it will abide.

The loneliness of which I have spoken, is also something like that of a rock in the great sea; which flows about it, around it, and over it, but cannot affect it, save in the merest outward way. Solitude, the possible lot of many, is to these few a lot absolutely inevitable. No use to murmur at it, or grieve over it, or shrink from it. It is in the very nature of things, and it must be borne.

They whose standard of right is not moveable, but fixed, not dictated to them from the outside; but drawn from something within; whose ideal is nothing in themselves or what they have around them, but something above and beyond both; whose motives are often totally misapprehended, because they belong not to the seen but the unseen; and whose

actions are alike misjudged, from their fearlessness of and indifference to either praise or blame: such people will always seem "odd" in the eyes of the world;—which knows its own, and loves them, so far as it can. But these it never does love, though it is sometimes a little afraid of them. Now and then it runs after them for awhile, and then, being disappointed, runs back, and leaves them stranded, in that solitude which sooner or later they are sure to find. Yet this solitude, increasing more and more as years advance, has in it glimpses of divine beauty, and a continued atmosphere of satisfied peace, which outsiders can seldom comprehend. Therefore they had better leave it—and the "odd" people who dwell in it, with deep reverence, but without needless pity, in the hands of the Great Consoler.

A LITTLE MUSIC.

A LITTLE MUSIC.

"WILL you favour us with a little music this evening?"

Such, in my young days, used to be the stereotyped request. And truly the favour was small: likewise the gratitude. Everybody at once began talking—louder than ever, and probably only the hostess, standing politely by the piano, was much the wiser for that feeble, florid performance of "La Source," or "Convent Bells," or "Home, sweet home" with variations — very varied indeed. Perhaps, afterwards, one or two people condescended to listen to a mild interpretation of "She wore a wreath of roses," or even "The heart bowed down," and "I dreamt that I dwelt

in marble halls." But anyone who remembers what was the standard of drawing-room vocalisation a quarter of a century ago, will understand how the gentle sentimentalisms of Poet Bunn and Michael Balfe sufficed for all our needs. A good many of our young folks sang—some in tune, some out of tune: it did not matter much, as nobody listened particularly. Some of us could play our own accompaniments—some could not. These last fared badly enough, generally falling into the hands of young ladies who "had never been used to play at sight," or being hammered into nothing by some wild pianist who considered the accompaniment everything—the voice nothing. And our performances over, the listeners or non-listeners said, "Thank you," and went on talking faster than ever. All had done their duty, the evening had been helped on by "a little music"—as little as possible—and everybody was satisfied.

This, I believe, most middle-aged people will allow, is a fair picture of what English drawing-

room music was, five-and-twenty or thirty years ago.

In the concert-room things were not much better. There was, so far as I can call to mind, no educated audience at all, and therefore no classical repertoire was necessary. Ballads and bravuras—theatrical overtures and pots-pourris of operatic airs—a few showy, noisy pianoforte pieces or arrangements for violin and flute — this was the ordinary pabulum provided for music lovers. Such a bill of fare as nowadays true musicians revel in, of Saturday afternoons at the Crystal Palace, at the Philharmonic, or the Monday Popular, was absolutely unknown. Nobody would have cared for it. I myself remember when Mendelssohn's "Lieder ohne Worte" were first played, and nobody listened to them particularly, or thought very much of them. And I once heard a large and fashionable Glasgow audience keep up a steady, remorseless monotone of conversation all through one of Charles Hallé's best recitals.

People do not do that now. Of late years, wherever you go to hear a Beethoven Symphony you have the comfort of hearing it in silence. A Crystal Palace audience, for instance, will listen to the solidest of music with a mute attention through which "you might hear a pin drop." Nevertheless, to a great many people—I was going to write, the mass of people—might be applied the withering sarcasm which was hurled at myself the other day, on daring to own that I did not admire all Old Masters. "Madam, there are people who, if you play to them a fugue of Bach's, will answer, 'Yes, very fine,' but in their hearts they prefer 'Pop goes the weasel.'"

It is in the hope of raising them from this lowest depth of musical degradation that I am tempted to use a little Plain Speaking. Cultivation can do much; and if we believe—as most of us do—in our own great superiority to our grandfathers and grandmothers, why not hope that our grandchildren may be superior

to ourselves? I for one shall be only too glad to think so. The old ways are not always the best ways, and the weakest argument one can use against a new thing is its being new. With exceeding pleasure I allow in how many things I have lived to see the world improve—especially the musical world.

For instance, last night, instead of the feeble evening-party performances just recorded, I heard a young lady, scarcely out of her teens, give Handel's "Whene'er you walk," in a thin soprano, certainly, but with perfectly true intonation and correct taste. Her mother played it for her; and afterwards played a page or two of dear old Corelli in a way to refresh any musical soul. And I have lately been staying in a peaceful provincial family, where the father and son sang "The Lord is a man of war" almost as well as I had heard it at the Handel Festival the week before; and where, out of business hours, the whole house was alive with music—one boy playing the violin, another the organ, and a third the

pianoforte, and all being able to take up a glee or an anthem and sing it at sight, without hesitation or reluctance.

Of course this implies a considerable amount of natural musical faculty as well as of cultivation, yet perhaps the great cause of the low standard of domestic music in England —where professional music is as good as anywhere in Europe—is not so much the lack of talent as of education. A professional musician of long experience said to me the other day that he believed everybody had a voice, and an ear capable of cultivation; which is, I think, open to doubt. But, unquestionably, the number of persons, male and female, who have voices and ears, and could, with some little trouble, be made into musicians, is sufficiently numerous to prove that we have only ourselves to blame if the present state of English drawing-room music is—well! all true musicians and music-lovers know what it is, and how much they often have to bear.

I once heard a non-musical friend say of herself and another, after listening to an exquisitely played trio of Mozart's: "It was eighteen pages, and—we bore it well;" to which, of course, a laugh was the only possible answer. But the negative sufferings of unmusical people can be nothing to the positive agony of those others—blessed or cursed with a sense of time and tune, when doomed to be auditors of "a little music." As to the instrumental—one braces one's nerves for what is going to happen—but when it comes to the vocal, one often feels inclined to put one's fingers in one's ears and scream. The torture, I use the word deliberately—that it is to sit and smile at a smiling young lady, singing flat with the most delightful unconsciousness; or pounding away at a deafening accompaniment which is sometimes a blessing, as it hides the errors of voice and style! And, oh! the patience it takes to say "Thank you" to a young man who has perhaps a really fine voice and great love for music, but has never learnt

his notes and sings from ear and guess-work. Consequently his unhappy accompanist has to run after him—stopping out a crotchet here and lengthening a quaver there, abolishing time altogether, and only too glad to be "in at the death" with a few extempore chords. Yet both these young sinners probably consider themselves, and are considered by their friends, as accomplished performers.

Ay—here we have caught the right snake by the tail! Let us grasp him hard and pull him out.

There is a delusive tradition still extant that music is an "accomplishment," and those who exercise it must be "performers." Whereas it is an art, or rather a science, and as exact a science as mathematics (which perhaps accounts for the fact that many mathematicians have been also musicians), and all who pursue it ought to be careful, conscientious, and laborious students.

Thoroughness in anything is good and right—thoroughness in music is indispen-

sable. So long as the pianoforte and singing are taught merely as superficial branches of education—with a view to showing off—so long will the standard of music remain as low as it now is among our young people. They may be performers after a fashion, but they will never be artists. For the true artist in any art thinks less of himself than of his art, and the great charm of music to all educated musicians lies in its being a combination art. That is, its aim is not—at least never should be—simply to show off oneself, but to be able to take a part in a whole and to contribute to the general benefit and enjoyment of society. Therefore a pianoforte player who "has not brought her music," a vocalist "who doesn't know that duet—has never learnt it," or a part-singer who is "very sorry—but cannot sing at sight," are a style of musicians much to be deplored, and a little blamed. Something has been wrong in their education; they have been taught to consider music as a personal exhibition, instead of an art, in which each artist

is but a student and a contributor to the general whole.

Until music is so taught from the first that every boy or girl, young man or young woman, who pretends to love and practise it, shall be capable of doing this in connection with others, of sitting down to play an accompaniment at sight, or reading a part in a glee as easily as out of a printed book, I fear we cannot be considered a musical nation. And it would be better for us if we were, since of all the arts music is the most social, and sympathy therein the most delightful and the most humanizing.

Another superstition of the last generation I should also like to drag to light and annihilate. It was considered fitting that young ladies, all young ladies, should learn music—to sing if they could, but at all events to play. Young ladies only. The idea of a boy playing the piano was scouted entirely. I had once a small friend who did it: we were both about eleven years old, and he liked to come on Saturday afternoons to play duets with me instead of cricket

with his school-fellows: till the ridicule hurled at him was too much to bear,—he came no more. (N.B.—I have never seen him since, but I believe he is extant still—doubtless a respectable and elderly paterfamilias. Should he see this paper, I hope he will remember our common sufferings, and allow his own sons or grandsons to study music undespised.)

All boys who show any aptitude for music should be taught it without hesitation. Nay, for some things, it is a greater advantage to boys than girls to have a pursuit which is at once a study and an amusement. We all know how very helpless a man is without his work. Should sickness or other necessity keep him away from business, he goes moping about the house restless and mournful, "as cross as two sticks," a torment to everybody, and above all to himself. Women have usually plenty to do, under all circumstances; but men, unless blessed with some special hobby, have almost nothing.

Young men especially. What anxiety do they not give their parents as to how they should spend their evenings, when they come home too tired to do anything but amuse themselves? In what way? No difficulty of answering the question in the family to which I have referred, where one room, emphatically "the boys' room," contained a piano, a violin, a concertina, and "scores" without end. The sounds that issued from it at all available hours, did not imply that the boys were idling. Of course music may lead a man into temptation, but it is just as likely to keep him out of it. If "Satan finds some mischief still for idle hands to do," perhaps it might be as well to place the idle hands on the piano or violin, and see what would come of that.

But then, as I said, music must be studied *as an art*, and not as a mere amusement. Whether or not my clever professor be right —that everybody has a voice and ear, only needing cultivation more or less—still in many cases it requires the "more" and not the "less."

Besides, "everything that is worth doing at all is worth doing well,"—and music is one of those things which if not done well is better left undone, for the sake of other folk. A man may hide his feeble sketches in his portfolio, and publish his bad poetry in books which nobody reads; but an incapable violinist, an incorrect pianoforte player, or a singer out of tune, cannot possibly be secluded, but must exhibit his shortcomings for the affliction and aggravation of society.

Therefore I would advise no child's being taught music who has not a natural aptitude for it. Decided musical talent generally shows itself early—many children sing before they can speak. I have written down, with the date affixed, so that there could be no mistake, more than one actual tune, invented and sung by a small person of three years old. But the negative to these positive instances is less easily ascertained. The musical, like many another faculty, develops more or less rapidly according to the atmosphere it grows in; and there is

always a certain period of "grind" so very distasteful, that many a child will declare it "hates music" and wish to give it up, when a little perseverance would make of it an excellent musician. I am no cultivated musician myself—I wish with all my heart the hard work of life would have allowed me to be! but I feel grateful now for having been compelled three times over, amidst many tears, to learn my notes; which was nearly all the instruction destiny ever vouchsafed me.

Nevertheless I believe I did a good deed the other day. A mother said to me, "My child is thirteen, and has been working at music ever since she was seven. She has no ear and no taste. If she plays a false note, she never knows it. Yet she practises very conscientiously two hours a day. What must I do with her?" My answer was brief, "Shut the piano and never let her open it more." The advice was taken, and the girl, who now spends that unhappy two hours upon other things, especially drawing, in which she is very diligent and very

clever, would doubtless bless me in her heart if she knew all.

But the love of music, which she had not, often exists with small capacity as to ear, voice, &c. Still in such cases cultivation can do much; many vocalists, professional and otherwise, have begun by being "vox et præterea nihil," that is, possessing a fine organ, but no skill in using it. While on the other hand many delightful singers, I recall especially Thomas Moore and Sheridan Knowles, have had scarcely any voice at all. The expression, the taste, the reading of a song, are as essential as the voice to sing it; and these last long after Nature's slow but inevitable decay has taken away what to a singer is always a sore thing to part with. So sore that many are very long—far too long! in recognising the sad fact—that now, when they really know how properly to sing a song, they have lost the power of singing it.

But art, cultivation, and a little timely clear-sightedness and clear-hearing-ness can prop up

many a failing voice. Anyone who remembers how Braham sang at seventy-five will acknowledge this. A then young, but now elderly musician once told me he remembered having had to accompany the old tenor in the "Bay of Biscay," given with a fire and force almost incredible in a septuagenarian, and received with thunders of encores. "My boy," whispered the great vocalist, "play it half a tone lower." Again it was given and again encored. "Half a tone lower still. They'll never find us out." Nor did they—and the applause after the third effort was loudest of all—so completely did art conceal the effects of failing nature. But suppose the singer had not been an artist? or the accompanist had only understood "a little music," and been incapable of transposing "half a tone?"

If music is studied at all it ought to be studied thoroughly, and from the very first. Parents are apt to think that anybody can teach a child, and that any sort of piano is good enough for a child to prastise on. No mistake

can be more fatal. A child who is fit to be taught at all should be taught by a capable musician, with intelligence enough to make the ground-work not merely superficial but solid, and not only solid but interesting. A great deal of the preliminary study of music is not at all interesting, unless the teacher thoroughly understands, and takes the trouble to make the child understand, the infinite and complicated beauty of the science of harmony—in opposition to the dulness of mere strumming. Then the little soul, should there be a musical soul—will soon wake up, will comprehend the why and wherefore of the most wearisome of scales and the hardest of exercises—and conceive an ambition, not merely to "play a piece," but to become a true musician.

That playing of pieces, or singing of songs, merely to gratify the parents and demonstrate the cleverness of the teacher, is the most dangerous thing possible for real art. It substitutes clap-trap for pure taste, and outside effect for thoroughness of study. It is also very bad for

the performer. Many a nervous child can play well enough alone—but if set to show off before a room full of indifferent people is absolutely paralyzed. And an inferior child, who is not nervous, is probably made intolerably self-conceited by this showing off; which foolish parents applaud and are delighted with, ignorant that the true aim and end of music is, first the delight of the musician himself, and next that he should be able either singly, or as a part in a whole to contribute to the delight of other people—cultivated people first—but likewise all people. For in spite of my friend's severe remark about "Pop goes the weasel," I believe that the very highest art is also the simplest, and therefore will always touch the masses—perhaps far more than art a degree lower and more complex. There may be two opinions upon Beethoven's "Mount of Olives" grand as it is, but I think the veriest clown that ever walked could not listen unmoved to Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus." Or even to what, after twenty-five years, I remember

like a dream—as the perfect expression of musical art and religious faith—Clara Novello's singing of "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

It is art such as this, and taste cultivated so as to be able to appreciate it, which I would desire to see put in place of that "little music" which, like "little learning" is a "dangerous thing." Dangerous in the first place because all shallow and superficial acquirements must be so: and secondly because it inclines to a system of personal display at small cost, which is always the deterioration of true art. Surely it would be none the worse for us in England—it is not in Germany—if, instead of each person being taught to sing and play for himself, more or less badly—the general aim of musical education was that every member of every family should try to be able to take part in a simple family concert—good chamber music, or pleasant after-dinner part songs and glees. Why should not our young people be trained so as to enjoy their own performances at home

instead of going out to enjoy, or pretend to enjoy, those of other folks, at theatres or music halls, or still less creditable places?

In the good old times, probably it was so. Pepys's Diary seems to imply that in his day everyone could bear a hand, or a voice, in an after-supper catch. And further back still we have plenty of evidence that the Elizabethan soldiers thought none the worse of themselves for being able not only to sing but to compose an Elizabethan madrigal. Our Victoria, who probably knows and loves music much better than Queen Elizabeth did, spite of her Virginals and Virginal-book, might spread downwards among all classes that wholesome influence which, if rightly guided, more than any other refines a generation.

But even in my own generation, I have seen music advance so much that I have hope in the "good time coming." It casts its shadow before. The other day at a garden party I heard one of Mendelssohn's Concertos for piano, violin, and violoncello, given by three

young people, in a manner that Mendelssohn himself would have liked to hear. And a brother and sister played a Handel duet, violin and piano, after a fashion that implied many a pleasant evening of fraternal practising. The singing, too, though one voice had a little passed its first youth, another owed more to cultivation than to nature, and a third, though it was exceedingly beautiful—well! the luckless accompanist had now and then to count five crotchets in a bar in order to keep time. Still—every vocalist showed taste, feeling, and expression, and every song was well-chosen and pleasant to hear. Between whiles people wandered to the simple tea-table under one tree and the fruit-table under another, but they always returned and filled the music-room, filled it—I am glad to say—with an audience that was *perfectly silent.*

And here let me end with a passionate and indignant protest against the habit which ill-conditioned guests indulge in and weak hostesses permit, of talking during music. A solecism

in good manners and good feeling, which whenever it is found either in public or private should be put a stop to, firmly and remorselessly. If people do not like music they need not listen to it—they can go away. But any person who finds himself at a concert or in a drawing-room where music is going on, and does not pay it the respect of silence—total silence—is severely to be reprehended. And whosoever in any public room sits by and does not remonstrate against such behaviour, or in a private room connives at and submits to it, is—let me put it in the mildest form—a very weak-minded and cowardly person.

To recapitulate in a few words. Let every child, boy or girl, be taught music, or tried to be taught—till found incapable. Then abolish music altogether—and turn to more congenial and useful study. Let no one pretend to love music who does not really do so, but let those who do love it study it well and thoroughly, so far as the work of life will allow. And let them always remember that

the aim of their studies is not to display themselves—but *the music*—since the best of musicians is only an interpreter. There are endless varieties of language to choose from, and each reader has a different taste and different style. Nay, I will go so far as to say that he who can interpret "Pop goes the weasel" with spirit, fire, and accuracy, is not a person to be despised. In one word—let everyone who pretends to do anything in the science of sweet sounds, try to do it as well as he possibly can.

Then haply we shall gradually cease to be "favoured" with that great abomination to all appreciative souls—"a *little* music."

CONIES.

CONIES.

"The conies are but a feeble folk."—PROVERBS.

LISTENING of late to the above text, it struck me, what a number of people there are in this world who may be termed "conies!" Very sleek, mild, amiable souls, quite harmless too (or apparently so), who go pottering about on their pretty little feet, and hiding themselves in holes and corners, coming out every now and then in the sunshine—only in the sunshine—and escaping everything unpleasant as much as they can. For they like brightness, and smoothness, and easiness of living; they are but "a feeble folk" after all.

And yet——

Long ago I planned an article "On the Tyranny of Weakness," for a tyranny it truly is, the sight of which often makes one's blood boil with indignation. But indignation against what? Against creatures so feeble that attacking them feels like hitting a man that is down. And then chivalry — the pitying protection of the weak by the strong—is a thing so right and noble, besides being so rare, that one fears to make it one whit the rarer. Besides, in dealing with the feeble, should we not rather try and put strength into them than abuse them for their want of it?

These "conies"—they are pretty, innocent-looking, peaceful folk—passing their mild lives in a hole in a rock, and desirous of troubling nobody—or at least they say so. Yet the extent to which they do trouble people, the torment they are to their affectionate friends, and to the world at large, by their weakness, indecision, and general

incapacity, is something incalculable. A wicked person one can meet and battle with—and some forms of wickedness are only energy turned into a wrong channel, and capable of being turned back again—but with the weak one has no chance. To have to do with them is like walking along shifting sands, slipping at every step, and dragged down continually by a weight not one's own. No wonder that we at last cry out, and learn to hate amiable fools with a rancour almost more than we feel towards absolute villains. The latter are ravening wolves, but these our wolves in sheeps' clothing, nay, clothed in the wool of the very mildest of lambs, creep beside us and gnaw out our very vitals before we are aware.

Well do we know them, these dear "conies," who have the character of being so very amiable. People who are always deferring to other people, who never know their own minds—perhaps, indeed, they have not got any to know—who are always hanging the

burthen of their existence upon friends and relatives—asking advice but seldom following it, making endless plans which they never carry out. They are full of the best intentions, have the most ardent desire to do right; they put forth that desire and those intentions in the most voluminous and exemplary form, yet somehow nothing seems to come of either. They are always getting into muddles, and if they ever succeed in doing anything, the chances are they do it wrong. In fact, most things seem to go wrong with them. Why? They are not wild beasts, they are not reptiles, they are simply "conies." The worst we can say of them is that they are "a feeble folk," and yet they aggravate us to the last limit of endurance.

Ay, even in small things. We all know sometimes what it is to have a cony at the head of a pleasure party—which is sure soon or late to become a party of pain. Not through any intentional badness. In fact,

the cony is the most yielding creature possible, always deferring to everybody. But of that quick yet firm decision, which, taking in unselfishly and wisely the greatest good of the greatest number, has sense to act upon it without troubling anybody, and so does the best for all—of this the cony, male or female, is absolutely incapable. Consequently arise all kinds of mistakes and mismanagements; some lose head, others temper, and the government, or autocracy—is not a good autocrat the best of rulers?—drifts into a feeble, muddling, wrangling democracy, which is the worst form of rule for either a picnic or a kingdom. For, not to speak it profanely, the doctrine of "Every man for himself and God for us all," very often ends in "every man against himself and God for nobody."

It is a still more unfortunate circumstance when a cony happens to be the master or mistress of a family. Especially the latter, since soon or late a household must fall into the hands of its women, and sink or swim

according to their capacities. I have seen more than one creditable, well-managed family, in which all the world—except himself—recognised that its master was a mere goose, happy if only a goose! Yet he kept up the delusion that he was "the head of the family," and under his imaginary guidance—and some one else's real control—all went well. But I never yet saw a household in which the mistress was a fool, or even a cony, which did not soon or late crumble into hopeless decay.

She who is exactly the opposite of Solomon's "virtuous woman," who does *not* "work willingly with her hands," who rises up late in the morning and dislikes the trouble of taking care of her children and guiding her servants, who, so far from "considering a field and buying it," knows little or nothing about money, except spending it, who has no will or opinion of her own, but appeals in everything to her husband or whoever chances to be near her, for these sweet climb-

ing plants will hang on to any sort of stick—such a woman may be very charming, very pretty, very amiable, but woe betide the man who marries her! He will soon learn to sicken at her sweetness, to care nothing for her charms, nay, perhaps even to despise her affection; since it probably expends itself in words and demonstrations instead of being the silent love of acts and deeds, which make the rest and comfort of a man's home.

It is hard enough for a man to be married to a bad woman; still, if she is not too bad, he can sometimes reason with and control her, or, at the worst, he can get rid of her. But for a man who marries a feeble woman there is no hope. She can take care neither of him nor of herself; he cannot rule her, for the hardest thing possible to manage is a fool—and, saddest thought of all, what hope has he for the future? A bad man's children often turn out very good—perhaps, as said the temperance lecturer about a drunken brother, in consequence of his "shocking

example." But what chance, either by inheritance or upbringing, have the children of a foolish, feeble mother, who can neither guide them nor herself—who, however sweet she may be, has no notion of the firmness which is as necessary as tenderness, and of the wise authority which results from truest love?

Glance into the inner life of a household like this, and we know at once what to expect. There is a general sense of doubtfulness and confusion. Meals never appear at the fixed time; arrangements are always liable to be altered or put off; servants call you a little after the right hour, and carriages drive round to the door just in time to let you miss your train. Children hang about, and get in your way, poor lambs! having no notion of obedience, because, in truth, there is nothing to obey; domestics are disorderly because the orders given are so often irregular and contradictory that it is impossible to carry them out. Consequently about the whole

régime is a kind of haziness—a sense of being out of focus—which to clear-eyed, accurate people is simply maddening. One feels it would be pardonable to relinquish the most charming friends in the world, if they will not give us our "meals reg'lar,"—if they are late at night and equally late in the morning —if they add to all their plans and intentions the modification which a sarcastic acquaintance once suggested should be put up as the motto of a very amiable family, "Please Heaven, should we remain in the same mind to-morrow."

Poor dear "conies!" they have little enough mind to remain in. But for all that they are very aggravating. They always listen to the advice of the last adviser. You may leave them on Monday, quite satisfied that they will follow yours—after you have taken an immensity of trouble to plan and to act for them; and, coming back on Tuesday, you may find that somebody else has persuaded them to a contrary course; that

they now see everything in quite a different light, and are prepared to act diametrically opposite to their declared intentions of yesterday. Of course you have nothing to say; all your labour has been thrown away. But they are so kind, so sweet, so grateful; so desirous of doing everything for the best, and pleasing everybody. What can you do but "grin and bear it?" They have done nothing, in fact they never do anything wrong; they are so excessively gentle and innocent. You feel yourself a great sinner for being irritated against them, yet you are; and you go away, resolving to take no more trouble about them, till the next time.

This faculty, or non-faculty, of never knowing one's own mind, sometimes passes for wisdom. The gift of seeing a subject on all sides is supposed to be very valuable; prudence and caution are always ranked among the virtues, and with reason. Yet I doubt if in the long run a habit of rapid decision—even though it occasionally becomes rashness—is

not less harmful than that fatal indecision which is the curse and misery of life. The people who do something—even though they may now and then do it hastily and amiss—are certainly more useful than the people who only talk about doing things; and they who have the blessed quality of being able to make up their minds—even though they make it up in a hard bundle and throw it at their neighbours' heads—are, on the whole, less harmful to society than those who never know their own minds at all. The shrillest clarion, if in tune, is more tolerable than those feeble trumpets giving an uncertain sound, which are the torment and irritation of life.

Especially in one phase of life, to which conies of both sexes are particularly liable, and in which they are particularly objectionable—I mean the amatory phase. Of course they fall in love—everybody does—and being conies, that is, a smooth, soft, pliable, and attractive race, are specially prone to give and

take the universal complaint, in a mild sort of way. Then, the trouble they cause to their friends and relations is endless.

If there is a question to which man or woman ought to be able to give a simple and direct answer, and in which not to be able to give it is something worse than ridiculous, it is the question whether they do or do not prefer one to all others as a companion for life; or whether, having chosen, they will hold fast to him or her through life. One would imagine this was the very easiest question to ask or answer, the very plainest point of right and wrong; in which, whatever difficulties presented themselves outside, there could be none in the minds of the persons concerned, who are, in truth, the only persons concerned. If there is one thing in life which people ought to decide for themselves, it is their choice in marriage.

Yet this is the thing in which everybody interferes, appeals for or listens to interference; so that what ought to be the happiest bit of

life becomes the most unhappy. I hope, to the end of my days to be able to sympathize with an honest and hearty love, whether fortunate or not; but I own that the "bother" some young people and their love affairs cause to their affectionate friends and the public in general, is quite intolerable.

Sneerers at our sex have said that "any man can succeed in marrying any woman;" and really when one looks round on the sort of men some women do condescend to marry, one is almost tempted to believe this. Persistency, patience, and courage are such rare qualities that they almost deserve to win—and do win—certain kinds of women. Though it seems strange that any true man, truly loving, should stoop to be loved in that sort of way—being asked by his idol for "a month's time to think it over;" or "till she has consulted her friends;" or, lowest degradation of all, "till she can inquire into his income, and whether he can make good settlements."

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Of course exceptions will occur. Some men make offers—especially to conies—before the girl has ever seriously thought of them, and some girls, of timid nature, require long persuasion before they love. Persistency, which is so attractive, often attains its end, and happy marriages are not unknown, in which the lover has been refused several times and accepted at last. Still the safest marriage is certainly that in which the momentous question needs only a Yes or No, absolute and final. Nay, perhaps the ideal of marriage is that I once heard expressed or implied by an old lady, looking with a smile at her old husband, and talking to a newly-affianced granddaughter, "Asked me, did you say? Why, my dear, he never asked me at all! We both knew our own minds, and so we married."

But the cony never knows her own mind, either before the offer or after it. It has been the fashion to abuse faithless men—"deceivers ever"—but quite as much woe

has been worked by women, not intentionally faithless, and by no means willing to deceive. A point-blank refusal kills no man, however he may say it will. Often it does his character real good; teaches him his own failings, and shows him—a rather desirable thing for modern youths—that he has not merely to ask and to have. No tender-hearted maiden need fear her discarded lover breaking his heart; many a masculine heart is "caught at the rebound," and the chances are that the second will do quite as well as the first.

The chief harm done to men is by feeble women, who play fast and loose—making and breaking engagements with equal facility, and with such exceeding sweetness that they still get credit for that "amiability" which is counted the utmost charm of our sex. How far it is so, whether a creature who can neither take care of herself nor anybody else, neither decide for herself nor anybody else, is fit to be a wife and mother, even if not

after the severe pattern of the mother of the Gracchi, I will not attempt to argue. All I can say is, I would rather see a son of mine married to the "strongest-minded" woman alive than to a cony. . . . .

Not that strength consists in never changing one's mind, in the mulish theory, "I've said it and I'll stick to it;" or in that other most amusing characteristic of weak people, the "contrariness" of the Irish pig, which, when you want it to go one way, obliges you to pull it by the tail in another direction. Strong people are seldom obstinate, and never feel it the least humiliation to change their minds on just grounds. The courage which can frankly say, "I retract; I was mistaken," and act upon it, is found among brave men and women: rarely among conies.

Yet what worlds of misery does it not often save, especially in the matter of marriage! How many unions, rashly planned, are as madly carried out, when a few plain words would have prevented the wreck of two lives.

Far be it from me to defend infidelity; but I do say, seeing we are all liable to err—liable, alas, even to change!—that an honest broken engagement is more honourable, either to man or woman, than the false honour of a deceitful, loveless marriage.

Another most trying thing about conies is, that they are often such exceedingly good people, in a negative way. You never can pick a hole in them; they are self-devoted and self-sacrificing; that is, they will let themselves be killed by inches, when a little wholesome resistance would have saved them for long and useful lives. They are ready to go on till they drop, when by stopping in time they need never have dropped at all. Stronger natures, who have to stand by powerless and see all this, find it very trying, and would prefer a little honest badness to that insane goodness which results in the good being altogether a prey to the wicked. Still often the tables are turned; as I said, there is no victimiser like your amiable cony,

who, without having the strength or the courage to be happy, has yet the power to make other people most thoroughly miserable.

How is this to be remedied? for a fault-finder without a remedy is like a doctor who can diagnose, but not heal, or attempt to heal.

So many co-agents, of fate or circumstances, and qualities mental and physical, inherent or hereditary, combine to produce what we call weakness of character, that wholesale condemnation of it is as useless as it is cruel. Besides we have always to fight against the old superstition that strength is a dangerous quality, except in men. A child with a will of its own was the horror of our forefathers; and to break the will of our little ones used to be considered one of the first duties of a parent.

Things are changing now; yet what a load of scorn, vituperation, and ominous warning has been heaped upon the devoted head of

at least one parent I know, who persists in *not* exacting from her child blind obedience, and in believing that to whip a child degrades equally itself and its punisher. "A rod for the fool's back," if you will; but let it be the grown-up fool, who has so misused his authority that he needs to enforce it by whipping. Exceptional instances may arise, impossible to judge, but as a rule I never hear of flogging being the established system of a family without feeling that it ought previously to be administered to the parents.

May it not be that the harsh rule of fear and the restraint it induces, destroying all individuality of character, is the primary cause of that numerous race which I have termed conies? Having never been accustomed to think or decide for themselves, they never do it; taught from infancy that "a will of one's own" is a bad thing, a dangerous thing, they have never used it. It is so much less trouble to lean on other people, to get other

people to decide and act for one. And then dependence is so interesting, so charming—especially in women. Thus the "feeble race" begin their career, and grow gradually feebler year by year, causing more and more trouble to all about them, until at last a sigh of relief mingles with the tear of due regret as their affectionate friends shovel the mould over them. At least they will burthen nobody any more.

But why should they ever have done it? Why not recognise from earliest infancy that "a will of one's own" is not a curse but a great blessing to every human being? That is, a defensive not an aggressive will, which, without interfering with any other, has the power to think, decide, and act for one's self, thereby saving a world of trouble to one's neighbours. So far from being repressed, this quality ought to be cultivated as much as possible. A year-old infant, who, if you hold out to it a handful of toys, knows exactly which toy it wants, snatches at it,

grasps it, and, if losing, weeps after it, is a far more hopeful specimen of humanity than the irresolute child who never knows what it wants, or how to keep what it has.

True, you will need to teach the small creature not to scratch and not to cry. You must help it to govern its own will, and even to learn the last lesson of true bravery, to resign its own will should necessity arise.

And there is always a transition stage, when the will is strong and the reason weak, during which your child will give you a good deal of trouble, and you will have to exercise not only great patience, but that wise authority which superiors must always have over inferiors, for the inferiors' good—a very different thing from mere tyranny. But wait, and you will have your reward. If, instead of merely controlling a child you can teach it to control itself, you will have made it into a higher human being, and benefited both it and yourself for the rest of its life.

It may be heresy—many old-fashioned people will think it is so—but I believe we ought to encourage in all children from the first dawn of reason a reasonable free will, to be exercised, whenever possible, in all unimportant things, and in the more important, as reason and common sense develop. I would allow children to choose their own clothes, presents, even, with limitation, their own companions. I would teach them never to lean where they can stand upright, never to ask another person to decide for them what they can decide for themselves, or to do for them what they are able to do for themselves; that at all ages, and in all crises, if we must act, let us act without troubling other people; if we must suffer—alas! it is hard to teach a child this, and yet we ought—let us, as much as possible, learn to suffer alone, without inflicting needless pain upon other people.

Sharp discipline this. It is even more dif-

ficult to guide a will than to break it, but what a different result we shall find if we succeed! Instead of feeble, helpless, useless creatures—conies, in short—we shall have made our children into capable human beings, whom we can rely on and trust in, who will be a help to us, and not us only, through the thorny paths of life; whom, if such be God's will, we may even leave without fear to fight the world without us. That sharpest agony of parents—to die and leave our children helpless—is greatly lessened if in our lifetimes we are able to make them helpful; by urging them to independence, not dependence; teaching decision instead of indecision; and brave action instead of passive endurance. They may make a few mistakes, we all do;—and some enemies—the weak often secretly hate the strong, even while making use of them; but in the long run the strong have the best of it. Hard-worked they may be; well-abused they will certainly be, but they will lead not

only the most useful but the happiest of lives.

> "Fallen cherub, to be weak is miserable,
> Doing or suffering,"

says Milton's angel. He might well say it to all conies.

Still, let us not curtail our text. "The conies are but a feeble folk, yet they make their nests in the rock."

So they do. They always find somebody or other to help them, and very comfortable "nests" do they sometimes make, chiefly at other people's expense. No matter. It is to the credit of human nature, and perhaps for the education of human nature, that this should be so. Let us not grudge them their shelter, poor things! Let us rather rejoice that there are some "stony rocks" which will serve as "a refuge for the conies."

Still, one would prefer not to be—and above all one would try to save one's children from being—a cony. For we must never

forget they will be children only for a few years; men and women afterwards, when we are sleeping in dust. Better far than teaching them to obey us, is it to try and put into them that obedience to absolute right which is in truth obedience unto God. Safer even than our wisest decision for them, is it to implant in them strength and courage to decide for themselves.

DECAYED GENTLEWOMEN.

DECAYED GENTLEWOMEN.

I WAS lately paying a call, which distance and occupation make only too rare, on an old friend, whose servant, after long detention at the front door, showed me hesitatingly into the drawing-room. There the mistress, who is a little near-sighted, rose up with an air of frigid dignity quite startling. "Oh," cried she, when she saw who it was, and came forward with an air of great relief, "I beg your pardon. I thought you were a decayed gentlewoman."

These words, so unlike herself, so foreign to the genial kindly nature which I and all the world know her to possess, were still sur-

prising, nay, more than surprising, till she explained that the day before the servant had ushered in a large stout personage, half-showily, half-shabbily dressed, who planted herself in the centre of the room, and, folding her arms, opened communication by saying, in a tone that might have overwhelmed any other than the resolute and self-possessed little lady before her, "Madam, I *ham* a decayed gentlewoman." Laughing heartily, I agreed that my friend had only taken wise precautions to keep me out, together with the whole body of decayed gentlewomen.

Another circumstance happened to myself a week after. I found in my drawing-room two unknown visitors—"ladies" they would probably call themselves—the elder of whom, mentioning her name (which I had merely heard of, and not too satisfactorily—very long ago), said, "I have taken the liberty of calling upon you to ask if you will help to educate my daughter." Verily, some people do "take liberties!" The child's progenitors had been gentlefolks a

quarter of a century ago. Now, looking from her to the mother, I felt that the only education she was fitted for was that of a kitchenmaid.

But the ludicrous side of the question fades into seriousness and sadness when we consider how many women, gently born and reared, unaccustomed to anything but contented idleness, will have in these hard times either to work or to starve—or to sink into the condition of a "decayed gentlewoman." This must always be, more or less. So long as the world contains extravagant or unprincipled men, weak incapable women, and children who come unwelcome, unblessed—alas! they never asked to be born, poor lambs—there are sure to be a large number of these sad excrescences on society, whom the hard-hearted mock at, the tender-hearted pity, but both feel to be a burthen, not to say a nuisance, indescribable.

We all know her well enough by report or by experience—not the "poor" or "reduced," but the "decayed" gentlewoman, whose whole

appearance bespeaks a tacit acquiescence in that decay. She has a more than shabbiness, a mouldiness of apparel, remarkable for buttons missing and never replaced, flounces torn and left unmended; gay but crumpled ribbons, and half-crushed artificial flowers. That stitch in time which saves nine has evidently not been her peculiarity. Yet she struggles feebly after the fashion, and her manner has a sort of deprecatory gentility, as if she were always looking back upon those better days which she is supposed to have seen, instead of forward to that future which every human being has, and in his own hands too, until he dies. But our decayed gentlewoman has no idea of dying, her vitality being in the exactly opposite ratio to her powers of usefully employing it. Her enjoyment, nay pride, in her own misfortunes, is deep and unalloyed. "I *ham* a decayed gentlewoman," she asserts —with or without the *h*—and plants herself at our fireside, in a composed and undoubting appeal to Providence—or us—to take care of her.

Let me not be harsh. I know there are, and must always be, a certain number of poor souls who cannot take care of themselves; who enter existence without a backbone, as one may say, and from birth to death are sure to hang helplessly upon somebody or other. Many are amiable, well-meaning; some are even attractive in their way, and like sweet-peas and other feeble vegetables, constantly succeed in finding a stout pole to climb on, till the support grows weary and fails, and then they bestow their charming incapacity upon somebody else. Alas! there must be always one section of the community destined to fall a dead weight on the rest; but is it not desirable to reduce that section as much as possible? And—how?

"God helps those who help themselves." So, as a rule, should men—cruel as it may seem to say this. But the exceptions to that rule must always be so numerous—the young, the old, the sick, the sorrowful—that we need never fear being turned into barbarians by the

practice of it. There are those whom we are bound to help and glad to help, while their necessity lasts. Not an hour longer. Infinitely more harm is done by that lazy pity which prefers almsgiving to taking trouble, than by the righteous hardness which amidst its utmost benevolence never loses sight of the primal law, "If a man will not work, neither shall he eat."

Nor a woman, neither; for the old creed that our sex must always be dependent on the other has become a creed outworn. First, because there are not enough of males to protect us; and, secondly, because many of them are quite incapable of doing it. Generally speaking, a woman at any age out of teens, being well educated, prudent, and possessed of a tolerable amount of common sense and ordinary "gumption," can take care of herself fully as well as any man can do it for her. And, except in the love-phase of life—when help is so delicious and helplessness so sweet—most men prefer a woman who will and can take care of herself. It saves them a world of

trouble. Much as they admire a "gentlewoman," they are the very last to tolerate her when she becomes "decayed."

What is the origin of the term, and the cause of the thing?—for we shall find both very near together. First let us define what we mean by a gentlewoman. A woman gentle (or *gentille*—for the French word equally expresses it), in whom, therefore, no external circumstances can affect the internal quality of *gentillesse*. She may sew and spin, bake and brew, as her great-grandmothers did; or she may earn her honest bread in any of the independent modern ways which might have startled a good deal those worthy ancestresses. But, be she poor as a church mouse, or obliged to toil like any negro slave, she will still remain herself. All she does will be done like a lady, and nothing she can do will ever make her less than a lady. We should strike at the root of many evils if we could put this as a fixed idea into the heads and hearts of our growing-up girls, "Once a lady, always a lady."

But, alas! ladyhood is no defence against hard fortune. During the past year how many hundreds of tenderly reared women in England and Scotland have, without any fault of their own, been cast adrift penniless, obliged to earn their daily bread, or to eat the bitter bread of charity. What is to be done with them? Many are young enough to work, and willing enough to work; but they do not know how. They have been brought up in the belief that to do nothing is the natural right of womanly gentility. In their terror of "anything menial," they see no chance for them except to become governesses; failing that, since teaching requires not only education but the faculty of imparting it, they sink into "companions." A few feebly attempt to practise Art; more than a few—and those are the most helpless of all—struggle at literature.

Only professional authors know how numerous, and how insanely credulous, are the amateur authors who believe that, wanting money, they can earn it by writing, or that

the want of money constitutes a reason for writing; also—still sadder delusion!—that being backed by a known author is, to an unknown one, be his or her merit what it may, a royal road to success. To us who know how hard that road is, and to how little it leads, most piteous are the appeals. "I see many a story in print no better than mine," says one. Most true; periodicals are flooded with rubbish, but much of it is never paid for. "Surely I can make something by my poetry," pleads another; "I have written poetry all my life!" And how can one suggest that when a person has "written all his life" and never been heard of by the world, the chances are he never will be? For true capacity in authorship—(I carefully avoid the much misapplied word "genius")—is irrepressible. It forces its way like water to its own level, through all temporary hindrances. Literature, like any other form of art, is a trade—a profession, and must be systematically learned and worked at as such. Yet none do really great work

save those who bring to it neither the lazy indifference of the amateur nor the patience of the mere bread-winner, but something beyond both—the divine impulse which no outside circumstances can either repress or impart. Kindly adversity may show a poor gentlewoman that she possesses this undeveloped power, and so teach her to become an author; but no real author was ever manufactured out of the impecuniosity of a decayed gentlewoman.

There has been a great deal said of late about lady-helps. The idea seemed at first admirable, but its working out has not been easy or successful. First, because the lady-helps have generally been discovered to be not ladies, at all but persons belonging to the semi-genteel class, considering themselves above domestic service, yet from their inherent want of refinement as well as of education unable to get into a higher sphere—just as one sees continually among the ranks of governesses many young people who, from both their

antecedents and their up-bringing, ought to have stood behind counters or swept rooms, and if they did this and did it thoroughly would have been much more respected and worthy of respect than they are now. Secondly, because lady-helps and ordinary servants find it almost impossible to amalgamate. The really good cook or housemaid knows her work, and probably does it, much better than the lady, of whom she will feel herself at once the superior, and yet, with a lurking sense of angry pride, also the inferior.

A friend of mine, most enthusiastic on the subject, soon discovered this fact, and wrote me that she had been obliged to remodel her household and take lady-helps only. She was full of hope concerning her nurse and housemaid (a clergyman's two daughters) and her cook (a physician's widow). Earnestly she begged I would come down and admire the perfection of the *ménage*. But a few weeks later she begged me to defer my visit, she was quite stranded, domestically, for the

time. The clerical young ladies had turned out not only incompetent but impertinent; the doctor's widow, though a first-rate cook —so good, indeed, that she might have begun life in that capacity (as was possible)—beguiled her leisure moments by making love to the gardener's "boy." In deep despair, my friend vowed she would rather suffer the evils of ordinary servants than attempt lady-helps again.

Still her experience may be exceptional. I have known instances where the plan has succeeded entirely, especially in nurseries. Lately I saw an advertisement for a "mother's help;" which probably meant that the advertiser wanted to get a governess for nursemaid's wages: still the idea was not bad. Anyone who sees the sort of girls to whom mothers trust, and say they are obliged to trust, not only their babies but their growing-up daughters, must own that a real "mother's help," neither nurse, governess, nor lady's maid, but a combination of all three—in fact, a sort

of amateur elder sister or maiden aunt—would be invaluable. And the comfort she was to others would re-act upon herself.

To those who have seen troubles, or have come down in the world, the society of children is often far easier than that of grown-up people. They never hurt, or bore, or irritate, as "grown-ups" often do. Their innocent love and childish confidence pour balm into a sore heart. And, besides, there is a feeling of being of use, of importance in the world—of casting a daily seed which can be watched springing up to bear fruit in future days. I can imagine, even for herself, that the position of a nurse who knew herself a gentlewoman, and therefore felt humiliated by nothing which she did for her little charges, whose equal she was, would, in any kindly and honourable family, be more than endurable—desirable. But this would depend mainly upon herself, and in lesser degree upon the sort of family into whose arms, or clutches, she happened to fall.

But whether or not the experiment of lady-helps might answer out in the world, there is one form in which it would not fail—at home. I once met—it was at a garden-party—a graceful, accomplished woman, who introduced her three daughters, all so much after the mother's type that I could not help admiring them.

"Yes," she said, with a tender pride, "I think my girls are nice girls, and so useful, too. We are not rich, and we have nine children; so we told the elder girls they would have either to turn out and earn their bread abroad, or stay at home and do the work of the house. They chose the latter. We keep only one servant for rough work, and my girls take it by turns to be cook, housemaid, and parlour-maid. In the nursery, of course," (happy mother who could say "of course!") "they are all in all to their little brothers and sisters."

"But how about education?" I asked.

"Oh, the work being divided among so

many, we find time for lessons too. Some we can afford to pay for, and then the elders teach the younger ones. 'Where there's a will there's a way.' My girls are not ignoramuses, or recluses either. Look at them now."

And as I watched the gracious, graceful damsels in their linen dresses and straw hats, home manufactured, but as pretty as any of the elegant toilettes there, I saw no want in them, quite the contrary. They looked so happy, too; so gay, and at ease.

"Yes," answered the smiling mother, "it is because they are always busy; they never have time to fret and mope, especially about themselves. I do believe my girls are the merriest, happiest girls alive."

I could well imagine it. Highly as I esteem my own sex, believing honestly that the average woman, on the whole, is better than the average man, though the ideal man and woman are probably both equal; still I must confess that

we have our faults, and some of them are bad enough. I have heard men say that they "never knew a woman who had any notion of time," who, for instance, could state a train correctly—in female minds the 10.32 always sinking to the 10.30, or the ten "something or other." Men do not love them the less for this, or for many worse weaknesses, while they are young and charming; it is a different thing when they grow old, unlovely, and fall into the preliminary stage of that mournful decayedness of which I am speaking.

Inaccuracy, desultoriness, and general muddleness are qualities which increase rather than diminish with years; and I am bound to say that, early or late, women are more prone to them than men. A friend of mine, occupied in a branch of art both pleasant and lucrative, which she has taken a world of pains to form into a school of instruction for the employment of women, tells me she fears that after all she shall be forced to take as pupils and apprentices only boys.

"Of all the ladies, old and young, who have come to me," she states, "not one has had the persistence to work with me a whole year —the time necessary to make their work valuable and worth paying for. They come here for a few weeks or months, then gradually their attendance becomes irregular on one excuse or other, and at last they give it up. Girls seem to have no idea of 'going to business,' as boys are obliged to do, working steadily on every day and all day long, whether they like it or not. Alas! I am very sorry, but I fear, unless I wish to lose my business altogether, I must employ boys."

May we not find here the secret of many a sad story? Out of the house, as in it, girls are brought up without any notion of the duty of work—persistent, consecutive work; so that even when it is found for them they cannot do it. For myself, after an experience of life neither very small nor very brief, I must candidly confess that my difficulty in trying to help my own sex has been not so

much to find work as workers—women who can be relied on, first to know how really to do what they profess, and next to have conscientiousness and persistency in doing it. Is this defect, a very grave one, owing to natural infirmity or defective education? Being a woman I incline to believe the latter. We are not radically inferior to men, but only different from them. Let us once find suitable work and be taught to do it, and I think we can do it as well as most men—as thoroughly, as carefully, and perhaps even more earnestly, for we bring to it the enthusiasm of an exceptional career and exceptional training. Were this training not exceptional, but universal; were we to bring up our girls as well as our boys to what is called business habits, punctuality, accuracy, the independent use and employment of money, accustoming them from childhood to keep accounts, and know as much as boys, in their way, of the general business of the world; above all, impressing upon them that *to work* is the lot and duty of woman

as well as man, be she rich or poor, married or single, we might have fewer of those melancholy wrecks of all dignity and loveliness in decayed gentlewomen.

Many reduced ladies owe their condition to misfortune solely, but a good many more to their own crass ignorance and folly, or the beguilement of "too much faith in man." For instance, one simple-hearted soul, asked by a trusted friend to lend him "a few hundreds," sends him back the required sum—her little all—requiring not even an I O U; for he tells her "such are not necessary between friends," and he shall repay the money directly. Possibly he means to do this, but he uses it in business to stop a gap, becomes bankrupt, and she penniless. A second, after years of toil, has laid by a little income for her old age; but she has a brother or cousin or some other male relative who wants it, asks and gets it, of course loses it, and she ends her days in poverty, or a pensioner on the sympathy of friends. A third perhaps has all her money

invested, but as she "knows nothing of business" she leaves it in the hands of a trustee, asking no questions, only blindly receiving year by year what he gives her, till some day she wakes up to find there is nothing to receive. He has muddled it all away, perhaps by carelessness, perhaps by something worse; but still it is gone, and there is nothing left for her but to work—or starve. While a fourth—alas! this case is but one of hundreds within the past year—having her money in her own hands, takes the advice of some male counsellor equally ignorant or indifferent (men think so lightly of women's affairs), invests it where it will bring in some large tempting percentage, which it does for a few years; then comes a collapse, and it makes itself wings and flies away.

Now, had these hapless ladies known two simple facts, understood by every man of business, first, that an extra high rate of interest implies always a corresponding risk of capital; secondly, that no money should

be lent to the dearest friend or nearest relative without the same security being exacted as from a stranger, and that no honourable man would borrow money, especially from a woman, upon any other terms—had they known this they might have escaped those afflictions which they meekly term "the will of God," but which come solely from the folly or sin of man. I could write volumes on this subject, having seen so much of the sufferings of my own sex from their own weakness and the wickedness of the other, that I feel, like Jonah, "I do well to be angry." But better than even righteous indignation against wrong are the attempts of prudent people to discover its remedy.

Among the various suggestions to save women from sinking into miserable dependence I will name one—that those who still have health, energy, and a fair amount of capacity, should embrace a calling which though exceptional in its difficulties, is also in its rewards—namely that of the professional

sick-nurse. Talking once with a lady, the matron of a hospital, who fulfilled to an almost ideal degree that honourable position, I said how different was the ordinary sick-nurse—the "Mrs. Gamp" that used to be, though fortunately she has almost ceased to exist—from Roman Catholic Sœurs de la Charité, or the excellent Petites Sœurs des Pauvres.

"Yes," she answered, "it is because they do their work, as the beggars say, 'for the love of God.' It is not only difficult but impossible to go through the hardships and fulfil the duties of a nurse's life, except for a higher motive than mere money."

That is true; but it may also, and very allowably, be done for money, and for that filling up of the emptiness of life which women after their first youth, or having gone through some heavy sorrow, often so bitterly feel. We have no convents for them to refuge in—and possibly wish to escape from, as soon as time has softened down or worn away the cause

that drove them thither; but we English scarcely value enough the system of nursing sisterhoods, whether religious or secular in their character, which should be open to women of all degrees, educated or uneducated, rich or poor. All who have gone through the agony of watching serious illness must have felt how exceedingly difficult it is to get a good sick-nurse—a woman who to the rare natural qualities necessary to that high vocation adds the professional skill which experience alone can give. But if found, her value is priceless, not only to her patient, but to the whole family.

Nursing is an instinct, but it is also an art. It requires to be learned by systematic training, which, however, is now supplied in almost every London hospital, and many sisterhoods, or other similar homes, where women of all degrees may acquire the requisite knowledge for a moderate cost. It is a question, too, whether those most useful institutions, cottage hospitals, which are now being established all

over the country, might not with advantage open their doors for the reception of two or three permanent nurses, who were always to be found there if wanted, and part of whose wages should be paid to the hospital in return for board, lodging, and instruction, prior to and during the intervals of work. This, however, is a scheme necessarily immature, which I merely throw out for the consideration of those who have time and power to follow it up. It might embrace the needs of many poor but capable women, "ladies" or not, who dislike the publicity of a London hospital, yet are anxious to work, not solely for money, but for that pleasure which often comes not till later life, though never too late, the pleasure of doing good.

The third and last division of my subject I have carefully thought over before committing to print. Many well-meaning, but I think mistaken, friends have advised me not to commit it to print at all. Wherefore? Why, in the name of common sense, should

a false and foolish delicacy so overcome our common sense that, while vice is paraded before us every day—when, as a publisher told me lately, "No novel will sell without some *spice* (*i.e.* sin) in it"—the mere reference to things which are not sinful at all, but the sacred mysteries of nature, is to be avoided as indecorous?

I have spoken of the careers that are open to women, without their trenching upon those of men, which is in every way undesirable. But there is one where men have been allowed to trench upon ours—a sphere of usefulness so natural, so right, so especially sacred to women, that I only marvel so few should enter upon it, not only out of the lower but the educated classes.

An ordinary sick-nurse must prepare herself to fight bravely with every form of inevitable and hopeless human suffering. But there is one form of *hopeful* suffering to which women are condemned;—in which formerly only their own sex ministered to them. Without opening

medical discussions, I wish to give it as my distinct opinion—in which numbers more of my sex agree—that women, and women only, should be employed, not merely as monthly nurses, but (why not use the old Bible word?) as midwives. We are apt to forget that childbirth is not a disease, but a natural event, in which Nature can generally take care of herself, if aided by care, caution, experience, and above all, patience. It is that quality of patience—so much greater in our sex than the other—which makes it desirable, if for no other reason, that the obstetric art should fall exclusively into the hands of women—not ignorant, but educated women—who, at the critical hour and afterwards, can use their brains as well as their hearts, their intelligence and sympathy as well as their practical skill and experience.

Those who go about the world—I do not mean the gay, but the hard-working and much-suffering world—must have noticed how very many women die in childbirth. Not so

much among the upper classes, who have skilled doctors and nurses, or the lower, who have neither, only some clever old woman, who, making up in experience what she lacks in education, brings safely into existence half the population of a village; but the intermediate class, the wives of clerks, tradesmen, or poor gentlemen, who aim at having the dignity of doctor and nurse, but can only afford them of an inferior kind, and often pay with their lives for the incapacity and carelessness of both.

It is for these that an educated woman, who would be at once a trained midwife and a monthly nurse, might come to the rescue, lessening rather than increasing the heavy expenses which in many families make the advent of every child a dread and a curse rather than a blessing, and lessening still more those sad fatalities which the stricken household believes to be the "visitation of God," but which others know well would not have happened, did not need to happen, except

through stolid ignorance, indifference, or culpable neglect on the part of those attending the sufferer. And such cases are only too common — commoner than most people know, because naturally it is to everybody's interest to hush them up. Alas! many of us might say, remembering how we looked in hopeless regret on some pale, coffined face, taken suddenly away in the midst of youth and life, "She did not die, she was killed— simply killed."

But setting aside these exceptional cases, anyone who has seen how much many mothers undergo during the weeks of helplessness when they are shut up with some coarse, uneducated, unsympathizing nurse, will appreciate the blessing that such a one as I have indicated would be, not only to the patient herself, but to the whole family— one who would for the time being identify herself with the household which she entered in its cloud of care, and leaves in that sunshine of hope and happiness which every little

baby ought to bring with it. Who more than she would have the power of making herself valued and beloved by both parents and children—passsd on with honour from one grateful household to another while her power of work lasted? Gratitude is not a common virtue; yet I think if any human being might find it, it would be a really valuable monthly nurse. Happiness is not the portion of us all; most women—especially the unmarried—must be content with vicarious joys, and also vicarious sorrows. They, above all, should understand that to be loved you must make yourselves lovable—to be valued you must prove yourself valuable. Yet I think most old maids and childless widows might draw a good deal of real happiness out of such a career as that I suggest—which has in it so many elements of making others happy.

Whether or not the medical profession will open its doors unrestrictedly to women is a question I do not mean to argue. The point is not so much the opening of the door as the

fitness of those who enter it. And in this case, as in most others, the universal law, the survival of the fittest, will decide the whole question within not too many years. But if women can be made capable of this one branch of the profession, I believe it ought to be left in their hands—a state of things which, so far from being novel or abnormal, would only be a return to the "good old times." I have no means of absolutely proving the fact, but it is a fact, that only in the last generation and ours, have male accoucheurs been accustomed to practise, or women to consider their services essential to safety.

The opening of such a career would give a future to many poor gentlewomen who, still in middle life, with good health, good sense, and good courage, wish to educate themselves for the dignity of work rather than accept the humiliation of charity. And it would also supply a want, and furnish to the daughters of professional men especially the only "woman's right" which it is advisable to

impress upon our girls—the right of independence; that every unmarried woman who does not inherit an income ought to owe it to neither father, brother, nor any other male relation, but to earn it.

The great mistake of the last generation, resulting in so many "decayed gentlewomen," is that parents have not been wise enough to see this, but have brought up their girls to be mere appendages to and encumbrances on the boys, spending large sums on their sons' education, and thinking that the daughters would educate themselves; and if not, what matter?—they are sure to marry. But they are not sure, and even if they were, is not marriage a partnership? When the wife can bring in on her side either money or the power of earning it, surely it is better for the husband and not worse for her? That is, provided she sacrifices none of the home duties which make her half of the partnership not the least arduous, to that independence which no honourable man would wish to

deny her. I have always noticed that it is the strongest, the wisest, and the tenderest men who admit and uphold this doctrine. Only the mean, the weak, the wicked among mankind are, or ever need be, afraid of women. And I have tried in these few plain words to urge women not to be afraid of themselves—not even though they have suffered that cruel "coming down in the world," which often seems so much worse to the victims themselves than to outsiders.

Take the world at its worst, it is never so bad but that it knows a gentlewoman when it finds her, and respects her accordingly, if she continues to respect herself, ay, even though she has sunk to lowest depths of poverty. But, ordinarily, if she be also a good woman, she never does so sink, for hands ready and willing are sure to be stretched out to her. When they are not, when she drops hopelessly into the condition of our friend the decayed gentlewoman, depend upon it there has been a "screw loose" somewhere.

Still, poverty may come, sickness and sorrow forcing the proudest and most independent lady to submit to be helped by some one. It should be a consolation to know that this help can be accepted in such a way as to confer a positive boon on its bestower. Of all life's joys none has so peculiar a sweetness as the power of giving, and of having those gifts accepted in a right spirit. And one of the most unlovely qualities that any woman can have, is the angry pride that accepts them in a wrong spirit, and rejects indignantly well-meant kindness.

There were once two women, both working women, and both gentlewomen. The younger, grieved at the shabbiness of her friend's winter bonnet, used a piece of velvet she had meant for her own in surreptitiously making one, and sending it, carefully packed and addressed in a feigned hand, to be left anonymously at the elder lady's door. Shortly afterwards the latter appeared, very irate.

"What do you think, my dear? Some one

has had the impertinence to send me a bonnet! How dared anyone suppose I wanted a bonnet? As if I would condescend to wear an anonymous present! What could they mean?"

Meekly the girl suggested that possibly "they" meant no harm.

"But it was harm. It was impertinence. Such an ugly bonnet, too! I can't send it back, for I have no idea where it comes from; but I would never wear it."

"Then," the other asked, "what do you mean to do with it?"

"My dear, the very instant I get home I shall take a pair of scissors and pick it to pieces"

The young friend said nothing—never did say anything. The dear head which refused to put on the velvet bonnet has long slept "under the daisies," and the kindly heart never knew the pain it unwittingly gave. But this little tale may not be useless to some who call their pride independence, and their self-assertion self-respect.

Nevertheless there are women—we have all known such—who, in accepting kindnesses, actually confer them. These are they whom no misfortune can sour, no poverty humiliate. They may sink from their thousands a-year to hundreds, or even to tens, but they never lose any real dignity. Everybody respects them, everybody loves them. Friends battle for the pleasure of their company, and for the honour of giving them any help they may require—sure that they will not take a farthing more than they do require: equally sure that what they really need will be accepted in a spirit so sweet, so simple and natural, that it increases instead of diminishes affection on both sides. For they receive kindness just as the grass receives dew or the flowers sunshine—knowing Whence alone it comes, though it may be administered by human hands.

Homeless though such women often are, and are doomed to be, there is never a home where they are not welcome and where their bright and useful presence does not bring

comfort and cheerfulness. They do everything for everybody as long as they possibly can, and when their power of doing ceases, they submit to be "done for"—in the best sense—without any unnatural or painful resistance. In their day they have taken care of so many, that it is but fair others should take care of them. And they never lack some one who not only does it, but has pleasure in doing it. Even when come the years of slow decline, or the last painful struggle before the final release, nobody is "glad to get rid of them." Though all natural ties may have died out, the adopted ties of affectionate gratitude are quite as strong, and remain so to the end. I have known a whole family mourn for and miss, almost as if she had been a mother, some poor little old maid, not connected with them by blood or anything else, except that self-devotion which is the strongest bond of all. As I have said, "Once a lady always a lady," so, once lovable is to be always lovable, and beloved. Any

woman who is that, need not fear changed fortunes, sickness, or old age. Help will come when she needs it, especially if, as long as she can, she nerves herself to do without it, and uses all her powers to make herself pleasant and useful wherever she goes. Then her candle, being never put under a bushel, will burn out brightly to its latest flicker. Of her it may be truly said that she is the salt of the earth; and be she matron, widow, or old maid, the wholesomeness of her nature will keep her fresh and young to the last. Poor she may be, "reduced," "unfortunate;" but nothing will ever sink her into the condition of a "decayed" gentlewoman.

ON NOVELS AND NOVEL-MAKERS.

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"SET a thief to catch a thief." Well—even so! And "Honour among thieves"—you may always find the proverb and counter-proverb—is an equally noble sentiment. I am not going to lay bare the secrets of the prison-house.

Still, may not the ancient gladiator be allowed to haunt his former arena, to examine and criticise the combatants, to watch with interest the various "throws?" And the old vocalist, who has quietly dropped, let us hope in good time, into the teacher of singing—is it unnatural that he should sometimes like to frequent the stalls, and make his own comments on his brethren still before the foot-

lights? For he loves his art as much as ever; he understands its secrets perhaps better than ever—only—— But peace! Is he not an aged gladiator—a tired singer? Happy for him if he is wise enough to recognise this fact and act upon it.

Yes—there comes a time when we authors must accept the truth, that it is better for us, as well as our books, to be "shelved." We ought never to write at all unless we have something to say, and there are few things sadder than to see a writer, to whom the world has listened, and listened with pleasure, go on feebly repeating himself, sinking from originality into mediocrity, and then into the merest commonplace. "Stop in time," is the wisest advice that can be given to all who live by their brains. These brains—even if the strongest—will only last a certain time, and do a certain quantity of work—really good work. Alas! for those authors who have to live upon their reputation after their powers are gone.

But though the impulse of genius melts away, and even talent can be worn out in time, there is one thing which, among much lost, is assuredly gained, and that is experience. The quickness to detect faults won through fighting with our own, and the knowledge how to rectify these errors when found, are advantages we possess still, and should not lightly underrate. Therefore, if after having written novels for more than a quarter of a century, I have lately tried reading them, may I be allowed a few words which I trust none of my co-mates will misconstrue, nor their readers, and mine, misapprehend?

Novel-making—I use the word designedly, for it is a mistake to suppose that a novel makes itself—is not an impulse, but an art. The poet may be "born, not made;" but the novelist must make himself one, just as much as any carpenter or bricklayer. You cannot build a house at random, or without having learned the bricklayer's trade, and by no possibility can you construct a three-volume

story, which shall be a real, enduring work of art, without having attained that mechanical skill which is as necessary to genius as the furnace to the ore and the lapidary's tool to the diamond. And since most long-experienced workmen are supposed to know something of their tools, and the way to use them, as well as to be tolerable judges of the raw material in which they have worked all their days, I do not apologise for writing this paper. It may be useful to some of those enthusiastic young people who think—as a fashionable lady once said to me—"Oh, how charming it must be to write a novel! Couldn't you teach me?"

No. I was afraid not. And though work is genius—as some one has said, and not quite without truth—I could not advise my young friend to try.

Novel—the word, coming from the Italian *novella*, implies something new: a *rifacciamento*, or re-making, in an imaginative shape, of the eternally old elements of mortal life, joy and

sorrow, fortune and misfortune, love and death. Also virtue and vice; though whether the novel should illustrate any special moral, is a much-debated question.

Apparently, beyond some vague notions of virtue rewarded and vice punished, the old romancists did not consider a moral necessary. There is certainly no purpose in the Arabian Nights' Entertainments, or the Decameron of Boccaccio; nor very much in Sir Charles Grandison. Probably less than none in Tom Jones, and others of the same age and class. Even the author of Waverley, the Shakspere of novelists, only teaches us, as Shakspere does, by implication. It has been left to modern writers to convert the novel into a sort of working steam-engine, usable for all purposes; and to express through it their pet theories of religion or morality, their opinions on social wrongs and remedies, and their views on æsthetic and philosophical subjects. From the art of cookery up—or down—to the law of divorce, anybody who

thinks he has anything to say, says it in three volumes, mashed up, like hard potatoes, in the milk and butter of fiction.

A portion, however, of our modern novel-writers repudiate the idea of having any moral purpose whatever; and, truly, few of their readers can accuse them of it. Amusement pure and simple—not always either simple or pure, but always amusement—is their sole aim. They—that is, the cleverest of them—are satisfied to cut a bit at random out of the wonderful web of life, and present it to you just as it is, wishing you to accept it as such, without investigating it too closely, or pausing to consider whether the pattern is complete, what the mode and method of the weaving, and whether you only see a part or the whole. That there is a whole—that life is not chance-work, but a great design, with the hands of the Divine Artificer working behind it all—so seldom comes into their calculations that they do not expect it to come into yours. Therefore, with a daring

and sometimes almost blasphemous ingenuity, they put themselves to play Providence, to set up their puppets and knock them down, and make them between whiles "play such fantastic tricks before high heaven," that one feels heaven's commonest law of right and wrong would to them be, to say the least, extremely inconvenient.

But to return. Certainly—whatever my fashionable young friend might think—no one can be *taught* to write novels. Yet to suppose that novel-writing comes by accident, or impulse—that the author has only to sit with his pen in his hand and his eyes on the ceiling, waiting for the happy moment of inspiration, is an equal mistake.

It may be a theory startling to sentimental folk, and offensive to lazy folk, but I believe a true author, of the highest and most useful kind, never has any "moods." He does not wait for the impulse of genius to come upon him—sitting miserably on his poor little joint-stool, or his elegant arm-chair—like the

Pythian Oracle over her crack in the sacred cavern, waiting for the afflatus of the god. He settles to his daily work, as regularly and conscientiously as the blacksmith and the bricklayer do to theirs. So much of it is always manipulation—spiritual and intellectual manipulation certainly, yet mere handiwork, to be learned by experience only—that if he thinks he can trust solely to inspiration, genius, or whatever you choose to call it, he will find he might as well attempt to light his house with a will-o'-the-wisp, instead of calling in the aid of the candle-maker and the gas-man.

Still, neither of these can do any good without light—the kindling of the heaven-sent flame. And the novelist's work is not exactly like that of the bricklayer and blacksmith—though I have heard of a popular writer who turns out so many pages per diem as the village Vulcan does horse-shoes. True literature is the combination of two things —the impulse to write, and the knowledge how to do it.

To make a novel—that is, to construct out of the ever-changing kaleidoscope of human fate a picture of life which shall impress people as being life-like, and stand out to its own and possibly an after-generation, as such—this is a task that cannot be accomplished without genius, but which genius, unaided by mechanical skill, will surely fail to accomplish thoroughly. Much of what is required comes not by intuition but experience. "How do you write a novel?" has been asked me hundreds of times; and as half the world now writes novels, expecting the other half to read them, my answer, given in plain print, may not be quite useless. The shoemaker who in his time has fitted a good many feet, need not hesitate to explain his mode of measuring, how he cuts and sews his leather, and so on. He can give a hint or two on the workmanship; the materials are beyond his power.

What other novelists do I know not, but this has been my own way—*ab ovo.* For, I

contend, all stories that are meant to live must contain the germ of life, the egg, the vital principle. A novel "with a purpose" may be intolerable, but a novel without a purpose is more intolerable still; as feeble and flaccid as a man without a backbone. Therefore the first thing is to fix on a central idea, like the spine of a human being or the trunk of a tree. Yet as Nature never leaves either bare, but clothes them with muscle and flesh, branches and foliage, so this leading idea of his book will be by the true author so successfully disguised as not to obtrude itself objectionably; indeed, the ordinary reader ought not even to suspect its existence. Yet from it, this one principal idea, proceed all after-growths; the kind of plot which shall best develop it, the characters which must act it out, the incidents which will express these characters, even to the conversations which evolve and describe these incidents. All are sequences, following one another in natural order; even as from

the seed-germ results successively the trunk, limbs, branches, twigs, and leafage of a tree.

This, if I have put my meaning clearly, shows that a conscientiously written novel is by no means a piece of impulsive, accidental scribbling, but a deliberate work of art: that though in one sense it is also a work of nature, since every part ought to result from and be kept subservient to the whole, still, in another, the novel is the last thing that ought to be allowed to say of itself, like Topsy—"'spects I growed." Except in one sense. If an author's personages are strongly and clearly defined to his own mind, he knows that in whatever situations he places them, they must think, act, and speak in a certain way. Events develop character—but character also moulds action and event; viewed thus, a really good novel in one sense "writes itself."

Style or composition, though to some it comes naturally, does not come to all. When I was young, an older and more experienced writer

once said to me, "Never use two adjectives where one will do; never use an adjective at all where a noun will do. Avoid italics, notes of exclamation, foreign words and quotations. Put full stops instead of colons; make your sentences as short and clear as you possibly can, and whenever you think you have written a particularly fine sentence, cut it out."

More valuable advice could not be given to any young author. It strikes at the root of that slip-shod literature of which we find so much now-a-day, even in writers of genius. To these latter indeed it is a greater temptation; their rapid, easy pen runs on as the fancy strikes, and they do not pause to consider that in a novel, as in a picture, breadth is indispensable. Every part should be made subservient to the whole. You must have a foreground and background, and a middle distance. If you persist in working-up one character, or finishing up minutely one incident, your perspective will

be destroyed, and your book become a mere collection of fragments, not a work of art at all. The true artist will always be ready to sacrifice any pet detail to the perfection of the whole.

Sometimes, I allow, this is hard. One gets interested—novel-writers only know how interested!—in some particular character or portion of the plot, and is tempted to work out these to the injury of the rest. Then there usually comes a flat time, say about the second volume, when the first impetus has subsided, and the excitement of the *dénouement* has not yet come, yet the story must be spun on somehow, if only to get to something more exciting. This may account for the fact that so many second volumes are rather dull. But a worse failure is when the third volume dwindles down, the interest slowly diminishing to nothing. Or else the story is all huddled up, everybody married or killed somehow—not as we novelists try to do it, "comfortably"—but in a hasty, unsatisfactory

manner, which makes readers wonder why the end is so unworthy of the beginning.

Either mistake is fatal, and both commonly proceed from carelessness, or from the lack of that quality, without which no good work is possible, the infinite capacity of taking trouble. "Look at my MS.," said a voluminous writer once to me; "there is hardly a single correction in it, and this is my first draft. I never copy, and I rarely alter a line." It would have been uncivil to say so, but I could not help thinking that both author and public would have been none the worse if my friend had altered a good many lines, and re-copied not a few pages!

While on the question of MSS. let me say one practical word. Authors are apt to think that any sort of "copy" is good enough for the press. Quite the contrary. An untidy, useless, illegible MS. is an offence to the publisher, a dangerous irritation to his "reader," and to the printer an absolute

cruelty. Also, many proof corrections, often made so wantonly, and costing so much trouble and money, are severely to be condemned. Doubtless the *genus irritabile* has its wrongs, from hard-headed and often hard-hearted men of business, but volumes might be written about the worry, the loss, the actual torment that inaccurate, irregular, impecunious, and extravagant authors are to that much enduring and necessarily silent class—their publishers.

An accusation is often made against us novelists, that we paint our characters, especially our ridiculous or unpleasant characters, from life. Doubtless many second-rate writers do this—thereby catching the ill-natured class of readers, which always enjoys seeing its neighbour "shown up." But a really good novelist would scorn to attain popularity by such mean devices. Besides, any artist knows that to paint exactly from life is so difficult as to be almost impossible. Study from life he must—copying suitable heads, arms,

or legs, and appropriating bits of character, personal or mental idiosyncrasies, making use of the real to perfect the ideal. But the ideal should be behind it all. The nature to which he holds up the mirror should be abstract, not individual; he is a creator, not an imitator, and must be a poor creator who can only make his book read by gibbeting therein real people, like kites and owls on a barn-door, for the amusement and warning of society.

We writers cannot but smile when asked if such-and-such a character is "drawn from life," and especially when ingenious critics fancy they have identified certain persons, places, or incidents—almost always falsely. Of course, we go about the world with our eyes open—but what we see and how we make use of it, is known only to ourselves. Our sitters are never aware they are being painted, and rarely, if ever, recognise their own likenesses. Whether or not it may be right to hold up to public obloquy a bad or

contemptible character, we might surely be allowed to paint a perfect one—if we could find it! which is not too probable. For me, I can only say that during all the years I have studied humanity, I never met one human being whom I could have "put into a book," as a whole, without injuring my work. The only time I ever attempted (by request) to make a study from nature, absolutely literal—all the reviewers cried out, to my extreme amusement, "This character is altogether unnatural!"

Hitherto I have considered the novel simply as a literary achievement—a book "clever," "interesting,"—above all, a book "that will sell." But there is a higher and deeper view of it which no writer can escape, and no conscientious writer would ever wish to escape. If we, poor finite mortals, begin telling stories, we take into our feeble hands the complicated machinery of life, of which none can understand the whole, and very few even the smallest bit; we work it out after our

own fancy, moral or no moral; we invent our puppets, and put them through their marionette-like antics, in imitation of the great drama which a mysterious Hand is for ever playing with us human beings—and sometimes we think we could do it quite as well, if we had the chance! But do we ever consider that in making up from imagination a picture of reality, we are, in rather a dangerous way, mimicking Providence? much as children do with their dolls when they make them go to school, or be put to bed, or have the measles; imitating ordinary child-life, so far as they understand it, in their innocent way. But our ways are not always innocent, and our wisdom is sometimes less than a child's. A bad novel, which does not "justify the ways of God to men"—as Milton vainly tried to do in Paradise Lost—but leaves behind it the impression that the world is all out of joint, that there is no difference between right and wrong, and nothing in life worth living for—such a novel

does more harm than a dozen atheistical books, or a hundred dull, narrow-minded sermons. Poison, taken as such, may find an antidote; there is no defence against it when administered in the form of food.

That the novel, not only in its literary but moral form, is an engine of enormous power, no one could doubt who had the reading of the letters received, say in a single year, or even a single month, by any tolerably well-known author, from all parts of the world, and from total strangers, of every age, class, and degree. Not merely the everlasting autograph-beggars, or the eulogists, generally conceited egotists, who enjoy the vanity of corresponding with celebrated folk, but the honest, well-meaning, and often most touching letter-writers, who pour out their simple hearts to the unknown friend who has exercised so strong an influence over their lives. To this friend they appeal not only for sympathy but advice—often of the most extraordinary kind—on love affairs, the

education of children, business or domestic difficulties, impulses of gratitude, revelations of perplexing secrets, outcries of intolerable pain, coming sometimes from the very ends of the earth, in a mixture of tragedy and comedy, to the silent recipient of these strange phases of human life—stranger than anything he or she has ever dared to put into any novel. Yet so it is; and any conscientious author can but stand mute and trembling in face of the awful responsibility which follows every written line.

This, even of the ordinarily good books—but what of the bad ones?

I believe a thoroughly "bad" book, as we of the last generation used to style such—bad either for coarseness of style, as "Tristram Shandy," or laxity of morals, like "Don Juan"—does infinitely less harm than many modern novels which we lay on our drawing-room tables, and let our young daughters read *ad infinitum*, or *ad nauseam:* novels, chiefly, I grieve to say, written by women, who, either

out of sheer ignorance, or a boastful morbid pleasure in meddling with forbidden topics, often write things that men would be ashamed to write.

Absolute wickedness, crime represented as crime, and licentiousness put forward as licentiousness, is far less dangerous to the young and naturally pure mind than that charming sentimental dallying with sin, which makes it appear so piteous, so interesting, so beautiful. Nay, without even entering upon the merits of the favourite modern style of fiction—in which love to be attractive must necessarily be unlawful—there is a style of novel in which right and wrong are muddled up together as if the author, and consequently the reader, would take no trouble to distinguish between them. Instead of white being white, and black, black, both take a sort of neutral tint—the white not so very pure after all, and the black toned down into an æsthetic grey.

In such novels the characters are made

interesting, not by their virtues but their faults; a good woman worships a bad man, and *vice versâ*. Now this may sometimes be in real life; but to present it in fiction, to make a really noble woman the abject willing slave of a contemptible brute not worthy to tie her shoes, or an honourable man doing all sorts of erring things for the sake of a feeble or vile woman, whom her own sex, and the best of the other, would heartily despise—the effect of such a picture as this is to confuse all one's notions of good and bad, and produce a blurred and blotted vision of life, which, to those just beginning life, is either infinitely sad, or infinitely harmful. Besides, it is *not true*. Time brings its revenges; and if there is one certainty in life, it is the certainty of retribution. Ay, even in this world: and, alas! down to the third and fourth generation. A creed, by the young doubted or despised, but which the old, whether optimists or pessimists, know and have proved as a fact.

There is another favourite subject of modern fiction: a man or woman married hastily or unhappily, and meeting afterwards some "elective affinity," the right man or right woman. No doubt this is a terrible lot; which may happen to the most guiltless persons, and does happen, perhaps, oftener than is generally suspected. Novelists seize upon it as a dramatic position, and paint it in such glowing, tender, and pathetic colours, that, absorbed in the pity of the thing, we quite forget its sin. The hapless lovers rouse our deepest sympathy; we follow them to the very verge of crime, almost regretting that it is called crime, and when the obnoxious husband or wife dies, and the lovers are dismissed to happiness—as is usually done—we feel quite relieved and comfortable!

Now, surely this is immoral, as immoral as the coarsest sentence Shakspere ever penned, or the most passionate picture that Shelley or Byron ever drew. Nay, more so, for these are only nature—vicious, undisguised,

but natural still, and making no pretence of virtue; but your sentimentalist assumes a virtue, and expects sympathy for his immorality, which is none the less immoral because, God knows, it is a delineation often only too true, and perhaps only too deserving of pity—His pity, who can see into the soul of man. Many a condemned thief and hanged murderer may have done the deed under most extenuating circumstances; but theft still remains theft, and murder murder. And—let us not mince words—though modern taste may enwrap it in ever such pathetic, heroic, and picturesque form, adultery is still adultery. Never do our really great moral writers deny this, or leave us in the slightest doubt between virtue and vice. It is the mild sentimentalists who, however they may resent being classed with the "fast" authors—alas! too often authoresses — of modern fiction, are equally immoral; because they hold the balance of virtue and vice with so feeble and uncertain a hand as to leave

both utterly confused in the reader's mind.

But, putting aside the question of morality, there is another well deserving the consideration of novelists, viz., whether the subjects they choose are within the fair limits of art. Legitimate comedy ought to be based on humour and wit, free from coarseness and vulgarity; and in true tragedy the terrible becomes the heroic by the elimination of every element which is merely horrible or disgusting. In the dying martyr we ought to see, not the streaming blood or the shrivelling of the burnt flesh, but the gaze of ecstatic faith into an opened heaven; and the noblest battle ever represented is misrepresented when the artist chooses scenes fit only for a hospital operating-table or a butcher's shambles.

I cannot but think that certain modern novels, despite their extreme cleverness, deal with topics beyond the legitimate province of fiction. Vivid descriptions of hangings, of prison whippings, of tortures inflicted on

sane persons in lunatic asylums, are not fit subjects for art; at least, the art which can choose them and dilate upon them is scarcely of a healthy kind, or likely to conduce to the moral health of the reader.

The answer to this objection is, that such things are; therefore why not write about them? So must medical and surgical books be written; so must the most loathsome details of crime and misery be investigated by statesmen and political economists. But all these are professional studies which, however painful, require to be gone through. No one would ever enter into them as a matter of mere amusement. Besides, as is almost inevitable in a novel "with a purpose," or one in which the chief interest centres in some ghastly phase of humanity, there is generally a certain amount of, perhaps involuntary, exaggeration, against which the calm, judicial mind instinctively rebels. "Two sides to every subject," say we; "and I should rather like to hear the other side."

Without holding the unwise creed that ignorance is innocence, and that immunity from painful sensations induces strength of character, I still maintain that there are topics which are best kept in shadow, especially from the young. We sometimes admit to our public galleries—though I question if we should—the magnificently painted, but gross pictures of a few old masters, and the realistic horrors upon which a certain French school has made its fame. But few of us would choose a Potiphar's Wife, or a newly-guillotined Charlotte Corday, for the adornment of the domestic hearth. Such subjects, however well manipulated, are apt, either in art or literature, to do more harm than the moral drawn from them is likely to do good.

Of course, the case may be argued pretty strongly from the other side. Life is not all "roses and lilies and daffydowndillies," therefore why should fiction represent it as such? Men and women are not angels, and bad people are often much more interesting

than good people in real life: why should we not make them so in novels?

I answer, simply because it is *we* who make them—we short-sighted mortals, who take upon us to paint life, and can only do so as far as our feeble vision allows us to see it; which in some of us is scarcely an inch beyond our own nose. Only a few—but these are always the truly great—can see with larger eyes, and reproduce what they see with a calm, steady, and almost always kindly hand, which seems like the hand of Providence, because its work is done with a belief in Providence—in those "mysterious ways" by which, soon or late, everything—and everybody—finds its own level; virtue its reward, and vice its retribution. Also (happy those who are given to see this!) those merciful ways which out of temporary evil evolve oftentimes permanent good. To judge authors solely by their works is not always fair, because most people put their best selves into their books, which are the

cream of their life, and the residuum may be but skimmed milk for daily use. But, in the department of fiction at least, the individual character gives its stamp to every page. Not all good novelists may be ideal men and women, but I doubt much if any really immoral man, or irreligious woman, ever made a good novelist.

I wish not to malign my brethren. Most of them do their best, and I think we may fairly decline to believe such stories as that of the "popular authoress," who having starved as a moral, prosy, and altogether unpopular authoress for several seasons, was advised to try "spicy" writing, and now makes her thousands a year. And even after weeding from our ranks the "fast," the sentimental, the ghastly, the feeble and prosy, the claptrap and altogether silly school, there still remains a good number of moderately clever and moderately wholesome writers of fiction, who redeem our literature from disgrace, or could do so if they chose; if they could

be made to feel themselves responsible, not to man only, but to God. "For every idle word that men shall say"—(how much more write?)—"they shall answer in the day of judgment."

To us, who are old enough to have read pretty thoroughly the book of human life, it matters little what we read in mere novels, which are at best a poor imaginary imitation of what we have studied as a solemn reality; but to the young it matters a great deal. Impressions are made, lessons taught, and influences given, which, whether for good or for evil, nothing can afterwards efface. The parental yearning, which only parents can understand, is to save our children from all we can—alas! how little! They must enter upon the battle of life; the utmost we can do is to give them their armour and show them how to fight. But what wise father or mother would thrust them, unarmed, into a premature conflict, putting into their pure minds sinful thoughts that had never been

there before, and sickening their tender hearts by needless horrors which should only be faced by those who deal with evil for the express purpose of amending it? - Truly, there are certain novels which I have lately read, which I would no more think of leaving about on my drawing-room table than I would take my son to a casino in order to teach him morals, or make my daughter compassionate-hearted by sending her to see a Spanish bull-fight.

Finally, as an example in proof of many, almost all, the arguments and theories here advanced, I would advise anyone who has gone through a course of modern fiction, to go through another, considered a little out of date, except by the old, and, I am glad to say, the very young. Nothing shows more clearly the taste of the uncorrupted healthy palate for wholesome food than the eagerness with which almost all children, or children passing into young people, from thirteen and upwards, devour the Waverley Novels. A

dozen pages, taken at random this moment from a volume which a youthful reader, I might say gormandiser, has just laid down, will instance what I mean.

It is the story of Nanty Ewart, told by himself to Alan Fairford, on board the 'Jumping Jenny' in "Redgauntlet." Herein the author touches deepest tragedy, blackest crime, and sharpest pathos (instance the line where Nanty suddenly stops short with "Poor Jess!") He deals with elements essentially human, even vicious; his hero is a "miserable sinner," no doubt of that, either in the author's mind, or the impression conveyed to that of the reader. There is no paltering with vice, no sentimental glossing over of sin; the man is a bad man, at least he has done evil, and his sin has found him out, yet we pity him. Though handling pitch, we are not defiled; however and whatever our author paints, it is never with an uncertain or feeble touch. We give him our hand, and are led by him fearlessly into the very

darkest places, knowing that he carries the light with him, and that no harm will come. I think it is not too much to say that we might go through the Waverley Novels from beginning to end without finding one page, perhaps not even one line, that we would hesitate to read aloud to any young people, old enough to understand that evil exists in the world, and that the truly virtuous are those who deliberately refuse the evil and choose the good. And I—who having written novels all my life, know more than most readers how to admire a great novelist—should esteem it a good sign of any son or daughter of mine who would throw a whole cart-load of modern fiction into the gutter, often its fittest place, in order to clasp a huge wholesome armful of Walter Scott.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

A BIOGRAPHICAL STUDY.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

As a rule, a man's life ought never to be written till he is dead. Perhaps not until he has been dead some years. For though, in one sense, none can know him so well as he knows himself; and of external knowledge gained concerning him, the simplest facts are liable to continual misrepresentation, still a certain amount of distance is essential to the breadth and truthfulness of the view — of any view. Especially of that most mysterious picture, a human existence.

Why some men are what they are; the influences which made them so, and how far those influences were voluntary or accidental— in short whether we make our own destiny or

have it made for us—who shall solve this eternal problem? Yet anything which elucidates it a little, which nerves us under the grinding hand of fate to counteract it, apparently by the power of our own will—that strange quality of which we know neither what it is nor why it is put into a man, into some men and not into others—anything which does this must be wholesome and good.

Therefore, when asked to write this biography, or rather biographical study, of a life not nearly done, I consented, because it seemed to ray out, with especial clearness, that "Light in Darkness" which is so needed in this often gloomy world. All the more, that its subject is a blind man, blind from childhood, and endowed with no special genius, except that marvellous quality just referred to —the power of will: the most mysterious power that any man can possess, and which no man can absolutely say he does not possess —until he tries to use it.

To encourage this—to give hope to the hopeless, and faith and strength to those who have done with hope, is the aim of the present article, written at the request of its "subject," though, I ought to premise, not in the way he intended it. He came to me, saying that in consequence of the foolish, fulsome, and altogether incorrect biographies that were made about him, he had been urged to write his own autobiography, but had invariably declined. Still, as it was considered that his personal history would advantage his life's one work, the amelioration of the condition of the blind, he would consent to a biography being done of him.

"But," he added, "I want you only to do it, because I believe you will do it simply and naturally, without exaggeration of any kind, remembering that it is my work, not myself, which I wish to have brought before the public. You shall have the materials—use them as you think advisable. I know you will do your best."

I hope I shall do my best, to justify the trust of so honest a man. But my way of doing it is not his way, and in fairness to him I ought distinctly to say so. He wished an article almost wholly upon his work; I felt that the portraiture of the man who has been at the heart of the work was the thing necessary. That conceded, he wanted me to write the biography in my own words: but, when I came to go over the mass of materials sent, I found that, heterogeneous and fragmentary as they were, dictated at odd times, and amidst the ceaseless pressure of business, there was in these reminiscences a freshness, a simplicity, a power of natural and graphic colour, which no re-colouring by my hand could ever attain to. Therefore instead of translating his language into my own, I merely condense it: instead of painting my sitter I shall make him unconsciously paint himself. He does not like it: he has even remonstrated against it—as giving the impression of egotism,—the last quality of which one could ever accuse him.

But I keep firm to my principle, that in this case his own words are better than any words of mine, and have conscientiously persisted in my mode of work; of which I take the sole responsibility.

The "hero" of this biographical study is none such in the ordinary sense. He has never fought a battle, nor ruled the destinies of a nation. The only destiny he has ruled is his own, the only battle he has fought is that which we all must fight; but he has had to fight it in darkness, not daylight, for Francis Joseph Campbell is a blind man, head and originator of the Royal Normal College for the Blind, Norwood, London.

My first acquaintance with him was on this wise. Some years ago, a friend, Menella Smedley—I give her name, not an unknown one, though her sweet, noble, beneficent life surpassed her books, and both are now ended for ever—Menella said to me, "I wish you would come and see a Blind School newly started in Paxton Terrace, about which I am

going to write an article. I am sure you would be interested."

I went, and I was interested: both by the children—their happy looks, and their evidently excellent education, but especially by their principal teacher, the head of the school, Mr. Campbell. A little man, of unimpressive appearance, whose chief characteristic seemed to be a quiet decision of speech, and an energetic way of moving about, as if not blind at all; a person, eminently "all there"—neither self-occupied nor pre-occupied—but alive to everything around him, putting out feelers as it were on every side, so as to take in all that was passing and make use of it.

Such was the impression made by the man himself. His surroundings confirmed it. The little blind family, for it was like a family, seemed so very happy. They laughed and chattered, worked and played—at all manner of school studies and ordinary school plays, just like other children; but, it seemed, more gay and contented than most children. And

their principal, Mr. Campbell, appeared to be the busiest and cheerfullest man alive.

This was summer-time, for I remember we soon after invited them all to a strawberry party in our hay-field, and were still more struck by the gaiety, the absolute happiness, of these blind children, who ran about the field and tumbled in the hay with shrieks of enjoyment, so that to pity them, or even to guide and help them, seemed wholly unnecessary.

After that day, year by year I watched the school grow into a College. The three little houses in Paxton Terrace were vacated for a large establishment close by, which had for its patrons the great of the land. Instead of tea-parties in our innocent hay-field, the pupils were invited to noble mansions, and even the Queen herself received them at Windsor, heard them sing, and spoke to them in her own kindly and womanly way. In short—within a very brief time—I believe less than ten years, the Royal Normal College has grown

to be one of the most notable establishments for the education of the blind in this or any other country.

And one man has been at the heart of it all. Does he not deserve a biography? Or rather, does not the world require to see not only the work, which is patent to all, but the man who has done it? He, living still his simple unobtrusive life, and being so absorbed in what he does, that what he is never seems to occur to him, ought, even in his life-time, to be thus presented, almost against his will, to a world which has so few like him, struggling manfully against evil until it is almost converted into good.

But let him speak for himself.

"I was born in Franklin County, Tennessee, October 9th, 1834. When about three and a half years old, while playing in the yard, a sharp thorn of an acacia tree was run into my eye. Inflammation ensued, which, by bad management of the doctor, was allowed to continue till the sight of both eyes

was utterly gone. This calamity produced a great effect upon my parents. It became a law of the family that I was to do exactly what I pleased and as I pleased. So, naughty and perverse as I may have been—must have been—I only remember two punishments, and, strange to say, both were unjust. The first was once when my two brothers and myself were playing in the barn—they both began fighting. I begged them to stop, and my voice brought my father to the spot. He was an impulsive man, and rushed forward to punish somebody. It being dark, he caught me and punished me. My brothers rushed to my rescue, crying out: 'It is Joseph—poor blind Joseph!' The whole family were in tears—my father quite inconsolable. I was only six years old, but this little incident, which I remember distinctly, did more than anything to prevent my becoming altogether selfish.

"About this time my father had heavy losses; nothing remained to us but a small farm in the mountains, where father, mother, and all the children had to work early and late. I was an exception. Nobody expected me to do anything; indeed I was allowed nothing to work with, for fear I should hurt myself. But once, my father being

from home, my mother let me have some wood to cut up and an axe. When my father returned he was amazed to find six cords of wood all cut and carefully packed away. He praised my brothers, and they told him it was I. Next day he went to the village and returned with a beautiful new light axe for me. Ever after he took the greatest pains to teach me all sorts of farm-work. But there were times when I was very dull—especially during the season when all the other children went to school. Oh, the anguish of those dreary, idle, lonely days! Long before evening, I would wander off on the road to the school, and sit listening for the far off voices of those happy boys and girls coming back from their lessons."

No words can add to the pathos of this simple picture. The little blind boy, the compulsorily idle boy, listening for the voices of the busy children—what a warning it is to make the blind self-dependent from the very first, and to teach them from the first as much as possible! But hope was dawning for poor blind Joseph.

"In 1844 a blind school was opened at Nashville,

and we heard that on April 1st ten blind children would be received there. Day after day my father went to the village five miles off to make arrangements for me, and came back saying, 'Melinda, I cannot do it.' My mother, a brave, noble-hearted woman, would answer, 'James, we *must* do it, it is the one thing we have been praying for, we shall lose our chance; the school may be soon full and then—'

"So she and the neighbours persuaded him—he purchased the things—a 'sewing-bee' was held to make my clothes—and in twenty-four hours I was ready to start. A kind old gentleman volunteered to take me in his buggy to Nashville—my father went with us part of the way—riding my own pet horse. When he said in a choked voice, 'Good-bye, Joseph, my son!' for the first time my courage failed. Earnestly I hoped the school might be full. When arrived there my conductor called from the carriage, 'Is this the Blind School, and is it full yet?' the reply 'No,' though given in a wonderfully kind voice, sounded to me like a knell. We were made welcome; the one pupil—his name was James—was called. I was taken to the school-room, and the New Testament in embossed letters was put into my

hand. I was electrified, and so eager to begin that the teacher sat down beside me, and in three-quarters of an hour I had learnt the whole alphabet."

So here was struck the key-note of that intense craving to learn, that marvellous persistency in learning, which have characterised the whole life of this blind man. He continues:

"Those were halcyon days. The school, or rather family, consisted of the earnest teacher, Mr. Churchman, a blind gentleman, his affectionate and kindly wife, and two pupils. We took all our lessons in their private room. But soon more pupils came, and regular school-work had to begin—especially music. I shall never forget my first singing-lesson. I had succeeded so well in my other studies, that the teacher called upon me first. He sounded A. I opened my mouth, but the result must have been very funny, to judge by the effect produced on my listeners. I was asked to 'sing a tune:' in vain; then the teacher hummed one for me to imitate—also in vain. It was discovered that I could not tell one tune from another."

(A very curious discovery; viewed in the light of a remark which Mr. Campbell cursorily made after the last annual concert of the Normal College, about a cantata which I praised. "Yes, but we had little time to practise—I began reading the score in the railway between the Crystal Palace and London only a fortnight before we sang it." Also, another remark which I heard from a noted tenor singer. "That blind man, Mr. Campbell, teaches music better than any sighted teacher I know.")

"Well, I was considered hopeless, was told I could never learn music, but must take to basket and brush-making. Piano-lessons were regarded as a waste of my time, and forbidden; the other boys laughed at me: I was left out in the cold. But, determined not to be beaten, I hired one of the boys to give me secretly lessons in music, and I practised whenever I could. Three months after, the music-master—also blind—accidentally entering the room, said, 'Who is that playing the new lesson so well?' 'I, sir.' 'You, Josie, you cannot play! Come here, what have you learnt?' 'All that you have taught the

other boys, Sir.' He laughed. 'Well, then, sit down and play the instruction-book through from the beginning.' I did it. Fifteen months after I gained the prize for pianoforte playing: a medal with the motto: *Musica lux in tenebris* (which motto now adorns our music-hall at the College). Our school being very poor, we could only afford one piano, on which there were so many to play, that I had to rise early, and practise from four till seven a.m. This winter of 1845-46 was intensely cold at Nashville. Our river was frozen over. We could get no coal; for a whole month we had to manage with a single fire; very few lessons were done, but I practised for five to six hours daily, working for half-an-hour, and then rushing into the play-ground and running round it ten times, which made a mile, and back to my piano again."

Such a boy was sure to make a remarkable man. By that time young Campbell's sight must have been quite gone, but not without leaving some faint remembrance of the visible world.

"I am often asked if I can remember how things looked. According to my philosophy no two people

ever see a thing in the same way. Thus if I wish to enjoy a beautiful sight, I try to get several people to look at it and describe it to me at the same time. Each sees it differently. They talk, each giving a separate idea, and I catch the idea of all. In this manner I have seen Niagara, the White Mountains, and even the Alps. But many beautiful things, seen before I became entirely blind, are indelibly impressed on my memory. Such as our grand old orchard, with its peach, apple, cherry, and plum-trees, and the clover field of twenty acres—an expanse of brilliant red and white—stretching out behind it. To this day I often go to my piano in the quiet evening and see it all over again—the flowery land of my birth.

"Then the stars. I wonder if other children love the stars as I did? As my sight faded, my mother took me out every night before putting me to bed, and made me look up at them from the piazza. Little by little the curtain was drawn: one night I could see nothing. 'Why is it so dark—why does not God light up the stars for your little boy?' I remember to this day the tears which fell on my face as she carried me up to bed.

"One vivid recollection, just before I became

quite blind, influenced my whole life. Wheat-threshing was going on; I sat playing in the straw; our old coloured nurse, Aunt Maria, somehow got into disgrace. I heard the stern order, 'Bring the cow-hide!' and saw, and shall never forget, the instrument of torture, and poor Aunt Maria kneeling before it, begging for mercy. I have been an abolitionist ever since, thank God!

"A few years later, something happened which firmly settled my convictions. When I was a school-boy and had a very severe illness—a fever—after the crisis, I remember waking up as if out of a long sleep. It was the middle of the night—a fire was burning—I heard sobbing in a corner of the room, and asked who was there. It was Aunt Milly, one of the hired servants of our College, and the mother of ten children, nine of whom had already been sold and scattered she knew not where. Mary, her last, was still a child; her master had promised to keep her, and in hiring Milly to our principal, it had been arranged she should come back home and see the child regularly. The cause of her sobbing, which I insisted upon her telling me, she explained thus: 'Massa Joe, I went last Saturday home to see Mary. She not at the gate. Milly fraid she very sick. No

Mary in kitchen. Cook says, 'Go and ask massa.' Milly rushed in to the massa. 'Where's my Mary?' —'If you means the little nigger, she's on her way to Mississippi,' said he, and told me not to fret and he'd give me a new gown at Christmas. But I falls on my knees before him. 'So you won't be good,' says he, 'then I'll just give you the cow-hide,'—and Milly got it. Boy as I was, and Southern born, after this story I was an abolitionist for ever."

And in one instance, which will be told later on, Mr. Campbell suffered severely for his principles. But through all his life his great aim, after the instruction of the blind, has been the enfranchisement of the slaves.

He has given me various "jottings of child-life," and "jottings of school-life," from which I have taken these extracts, of course condensed, for a practised literary hand can usually put into six words exactly the same thing which others express in twelve; but it has only been condensation, not alteration, and I call my readers' attention to it, and

have been glad to use it thus instead of re-writing it—just to show in what a strangely picturesque and graphic manner a blind man can put things, to say nothing of the deep pathos of his exceeding simplicity.

His details of boy-life, given with great minuteness of recollection, show that little Francis Joseph must have been, and have tried hard to make himself, very much the same as other boys.

"I was very fond of hunting and fishing. In company with my brothers I would ascend the most inaccessible mountain cliffs. I became an expert climber. Once, far from home, we decided to quit the path, and descend the steep face of the mountain, swinging ourselves from tree to tree. I could climb any tree that I could clasp with my arms. In my boy-life among the mountains my chief enemies were the snakes—rattle-snake, copper-heads, cotton-mouths, and vipers. Often I stepped unconsciously over them — sometimes on them. Once, working in the corn-field, I took up a large snake in an armfull of corn. It struggled to free itself, I felt it, and threw it violently from me—

which probably saved my life. The snake was killed, and I resumed my work. I wonder if I have the moral courage to face equal dangers and difficulties still?

"To all our farm animals I was devoted—especially to the horses. My father kept one specially for me. She was a fiery, wide-awake little cob, but, if she had been a human being, she could not have understood my blindness better. She would come to me anywhere, wait patiently for me to mount, which I could do without saddle or bridle; and though on her mettle with others, with me she always carefully picked her way. Even in the mountains I could trust her implicitly, giving her the rein in difficult places, sure that she would carry me safely over.

"My father's farm was heavily mortgaged; he could not afford me a university education, so I determined to earn the money and educate myself. Giving music lessons was the only way. So I got two pupils, daughters of a Mr. Allen. One of these young ladies seated herself at the piano—I sat beside her. 'What shall I do?' she said. Now I could play brilliant pieces. As a blind boy-pianist I had been petted and praised—I thought myself a wonderful

musician. But my knowledge was superficial; I had not been trained in the art of teaching. What did I really know? How was the music written: How, above all, was I to teach a sighted person? And I must teach. It was my only way of getting education.

"I said to Miss Allen and her sister that they must just play to me to-day, next week we would make a regular beginning. Then I walked off towards the cemetery. The man was just locking up, but he let me in. I went to the monument of General Carroll, and sat down on its lowest step. What was I to do? Even to live, I must earn money—to educate myself well, considerable money. And my music, which I had depended on, had crumbled away at the first touch. Our teacher at the blind school did not know his business. This I now thoroughly realised. He could not help me. What must I do? The chilliness of night came on. The city bells seemed to ring with a mournful sound. Suddenly I thought of General Carroll, on whose tomb I sat. He once was a poor boy like me, yet for twelve years he was the idolized Governor of Tennessee. I sprang to my feet, my mind made up.

"That night I went to find a Mr. Taylor, an Englishman; pupil of Moscheles and Mendelssohn —one of the best pianists in America. But he had had an unhappy life, and was considered a sort of bear. Not asking me to sit down, he inquired what I wanted. I stammered out, 'Mr. Taylor, I am a fool.' 'Well, Joseph, my boy, I knew that, I have always known it, but it is less your fault than that of your teachers!' Then I told him my story, and implored him to let me begin music again under his guidance, from the very beginning. 'Do you know what you ask, boy? Your teacher is my friend. He is a good violin-player, but he cannot teach the piano. Get his consent, and I will teach you.'

"The clock struck ten as he spoke—but I went off direct to a good friend of mine, Mrs. Bell, who was one of the great influences in our Blind School —and knew everybody. I told her everything. She arranged the matter. The following Thursday, at seven p.m., I was seated by Mr. Taylor at his piano, and did not leave it till eleven. Next day the two Miss Allens had their first lesson from me. A year later, when I was just sixteen years old, I was appointed teacher of music in the very

Institution where I had first been told I could never learn music."

These facts involve a curious and much disputed theory. Most musicians will agree that to attempt to teach their beloved art to anyone not a born artist, or short of that, with at least a tolerable ear, is worse than useless, impossible; some may say, even culpable, as it wastes time which might be better employed upon something else. Yet I have heard it asserted, and by an accomplished musician and music-teacher, that every human being has an ear and a voice, if properly cultivated. And Mr. Campbell's own experience is, that almost none of his pupils when they first came to him, showed special genius for music.

Therefore, in his case as in many others, we must fall back upon the theory that work *is* genius. Also, that the quiet darkness in which the blind live, is peculiarly favourable to the development of any gift connected with the two senses which they have in com-

pensating proportion to the one lost sense of sight, viz., hearing and touch. Moreover, music, and the making of it, is such an exceeding happiness, a mixture of toil and pleasure, in which the pleasure far surpasses the toil, that the deduction drawn is obvious. In all systems for the education of the blind, with a view to lifting them to the ordinary level of self-dependent, self-supporting human beings, music ought to hold the primary place—for in this, so far from being more heavily weighted in the race than their brethren, the chances are that they will run lighter, being disencumbered of some hindrances which sighted people have to contend against. For the same reason, many pianoforte tuners allege that when a blind tuner is properly taught his business, he surpasses all others, from his excessive delicacy and exactitude of ear.

Thus we find the blind boy fairly plunged into life as a young man, maintaining himself by music-lessons, while he found time to continue his education in other branches. His

college curriculum included mathematics, Latin and Greek. The first he had great capacity for; the two latter were "positive drudgery."

"Nevertheless I was determined to succeed. At first I simply occupied my seat in the class; but I well remember the surprise of our Professor when one day I quietly asked him if the translation was correct. 'Why not?' 'For two reasons, the second being that in order to cross, the translator has made the army march down the river, when it should have marched up.' 'Indeed! give me the book.' He found it was really so. Afterwards he made me recite and translate, and tested me thoroughly for half-an-hour. Then he said to the class, 'Young gentlemen, I think we have all had a lesson to-day,' shook my hand cordially, and invited me to dine with him."

Besides being a studious, young Campbell must have been an extremely practical boy. He tells a story, funny enough, of the way he secretly led a revolution—not unnecessary—with regard to the food of the school, which was very bad.

"We were informed that the low funds of the school made rigid economy necessary. But while we lived poorly, we knew that our teachers lived exceedingly well. Not that we could see the roast turkeys, geese, &c., but we could smell them. Our remonstrances were in vain. We called an 'indignation' meeting. After much time wasted in talking, I urged that a small committee should be appointed—three of us. Though I was the youngest, they made me one. That night when all were asleep, I managed to get into the larder, and finding there a quantity of dainty food, pies, jellies, &c., took away specimens of it, and also of our food, the miserable bread, butter, and sausages, given us daily. With this tell-tale basket in my possession, I dared not go to sleep, but waited till half-past five, when the bell summoned us to rise and go for our walk. During the walk I left my basket with Aunt Sarah, a coloured woman I knew who kept a shop. In the afternoon I reclaimed it, and carried it to the President of the Board, a kind old gentleman, to whom I told my story. He disbelieved me. 'Boy, this will never do.' 'Would you see the food, Sir?' 'Yes, then I will believe, and not till then.' I produced the basket, and he did believe. He asked

me in a tremulous voice how I got at the things, and I told him the whole truth. 'Boy,' said he, 'that was a very daring thing to do, but plucky nevertheless. Leave those things with me, and I will see to the matter.' He did, for we heard that next afternoon a special meeting of Directors was called, and within a few days it became known that the Principal had resigned. Whether he ever knew the part I had had in the affair, I cannot tell, but certainly I myself have never regretted it."

There is, there necessarily must be, a little touch of unconscious pride, in these details. But it is pride, not so much in personal gifts, which are the source of most people's vanity—God knows why, since it is He alone who gives them—as in the noble use of these gifts, such as they are, whether small or great; and it is to spur others on to use theirs that Mr. Campbell tells his most touching and heroic story.

"At this time," he proceeds, "on account of my teaching and daily attendance at the College, I was obliged to work day and night as well. I employed

two readers; one read for me till ten p.m., then I went to bed with an alarum clock set at two a.m. When it sounded I sprang up, dragged my second reader out of bed, and as quickly as possible resumed my work."

Of course this could not last. It was the old story of "burning the candle at both ends." One day, young Campbell suddenly fell ill. The doctor told him unless he took a three months' holiday he had no chance of life. At first he absolutely refused to give up work: then common sense came to his rescue and prevented his committing this moral suicide. He allowed his sister to carry him off to the station, and then home—simply inquiring "if his books were packed?" "Yes," answered the wise doctor, "packed where you will never find them." So, bookless, the student went off on his long holiday to "rest," as, he says, "we so often hear people talk of resting." But his father was living five miles away from the beloved mountain home, in a village, where to encamp,

amidst its quiet stagnation, would have been to this ardent nature, "like a sentence of three months' imprisonment." He announced his intention of going on to the mountain springs, a favourite resort, where some families had built themselves summer cottages.

"So my brother, a friend, and myself set out on foot. The first carried a rifle, the second a bag of books for me, and I an axe, bought on purpose for the expedition. I was not very vigorous, so we reached the springs late at night, receiving a hearty welcome. I went to bed, slept for twelve hours and was fresh again. Then I determined to go on to a cabin five miles further, which belonged to my uncle, and was sometimes occupied by his men when tending cattle on the hills. We took a day's food, and walked slowly, reaching the hut about three p.m. It was much out of repair, but I only wanted a place to sleep in at night, and shelter me when it rained. Two miles below it was my uncle's house. There we went—and my aunt promised to supply us with food, on condition that we sent for or fetched it."

What a picture of life among the moun-

tains, the glorious free wild life, so delightful to the young, if only they have eyes to see. This young man had none, yet he seems to have done just as well without them.

"Our first few days we spent in reconnoitring our surroundings. The hut stood within a few feet of the brow of the mountain. If I threw a stone down I could hear it bounding down for ever so long. By-and-by I learnt to clamber up and down this cliff, and found ten enormous trees growing there, one above the other, the upper one being only a few feet from the hut door, the lowest about two hundred feet beneath. So I planned and proposed what backwoodsmen call a 'cataract,' and sallied forth axe in hand to attack my first tree, about four feet in diameter. My strength was below par. I got on slowly. The other two laughed at me, and suggested I should ask for help. But my brother was always out hunting, and he and the other lad took turns in fetching our food, and in reading to me of evenings. The weather was glorious, I soon drank in health at every pore, and was able to cut the whole ten trees, three parts through, in about a month.

"At last all was ready. The biggest tree—the

one next to our hut, was hewn through, except a very small bit, and prepared to fall. We were greatly excited, for the success of my plan depended upon the way the trees, beginning with the lowest, had been cut, so as to fall straight. I examined all, one by one, then climbed back to the topmost tree, and applied my axe vigorously. Ten minutes more and I heard my brother call out 'Hurrah, it's going!' We all leaped aside, least we should be struck by the falling branches. What a turmoil! Tree after tree began to go, each pressing upon each, till the whole of them went plunging down the mountain side. The topmost one finally found a resting-place far below. Triumphant with success, we three boys shouted and threw up our hats, and finally we brought our supper and laid it out in the stump of the huge tree which had completed our 'cataract.'"

So vigorous and wholesome a life soon restored the health which for once he had foolishly risked: and young Campbell, after the three months' holiday which he had faithfully promised to take, returned to his work full of strength, energy, and enthusiasm. Thus early he practically proved the wisdom of one

of his pet theories in later life, that the physical education of the blind should be held of equal importance with their mental development. This especially, because experience has convinced him that their average standard of health is many degrees below the average of sighted persons. So much blindness originates in congenital and hereditary disease that, both in those born blind, and in cases where some unfortunate accident has resulted in inflammation or other weakness of the organ, we have more to contend against than in ordinary healthy subjects. Also, the tender trammels in which the blind are mistakenly kept by their friends, against which "poor blind Joseph" struggled so successfully, the want of movement, exercise, and general sanitary life, help to keep them sensitive and delicate, physically. As a rule, the lesson we learn touching the blind, nay, all who are afflicted with any inevitable life-long deprivation is this —Pity them not, except silently. Encourage, help them; but also teach them to help

themselves. However little they can do, let them do it. Accustom them to face their misfortune, and instead of making it an excuse for helplessness, idleness, ill-humour—faults which we blame in others, but condone in them—to use it as a spur for courage and heroism. Sympathy they must and will have—but I think the saddest sufferer will admit that it is always better to be reverenced than to be pitied.

Pity is certainly the last thing which Francis Joseph Campbell seems to have expected, or desired. On his return to Nashville, the young man threw himself into the very thick of the battle, the sore battle of life, in which so many fail miserably, even when blessed with all he had not. But his courage and energy were unconquerable.

The Blind School to which he belonged was now wanting pupils. Parents were not alive to its advantages, and refused to send their children. Campbell was requested to make a short holiday tour through Tennessee,

and having discovered by means of the census how many blind children there were, to appeal to their parents, and by every possible means to "compel them to come in." He took a young friend with him, and started on horseback from his own home in Franklyn county.

Their adventures are as good as a fairy tale—and, to anyone who did not know the hero of them, would appear almost incredible. But this blind man had the indomitable will which, like faith, can "remove mountains"—or climb over them. I shall let him tell his own story.

"Knowing the census was very imperfect, I visited all schools, called upon doctors, clergymen, and even blacksmiths—country folks always gossip while their horses are shod—and by the end of the first week had found three blind children to send to Nashville. With regard to the third, I have some curious recollections. His name was Cornelius Foster. To get him I had to cross the Hywassie, a mountain torrent. There were no bridges over it, but there

was a ferry and a ford, the former only used when the latter was impassable. Nobody told us of it, so we rode into the stream and soon found ourselves plunged over a steep bank into deep water. It was my first experience of the kind; I called to George to let his horse go as free as possible, soothed Nelly, and sat perfectly still on her back. She neither returned, nor tried to climb up the bank, but with true instinct swam diagonally, till we gained the opposite shore. There the ferryman called out to us, and explained how we had missed the ford, adding that he would not have crossed as we did for a thousand dollars. We were wet through, but soon dried in the July sun of Tennessee. I found my little blind boy, arranged with his parents, took him up behind me on Nelly, rode to meet the other two boys at a station, and placed them all in charge of the conductor of the Nashville train, while I went further in search of other children.

"I found by the census a little girl named Agnes Jones; and she lived on Flint Mountain forty miles off. George and I started. Our route was by Catawba River, then up a swift watercourse called Elk Creek, which, much swollen by recent rains, wound to and fro through a long gorge. We

crossed it I counted nineteen times. Late in the afternoon we left this watercourse and followed the zigzag path to the top of the Flint Mountain, which we reached at sunset, but had still four miles further to go. George was no mountaineer, but a city boy. Completely worn out with fatigue, he asked 'if I meant to camp out all night?' At that minute we heard a deep roll of thunder, mountain thunder, and at once the storm was upon us. Our horses became unmanageable, we had to dismount and hold them. The storm ended in total darkness. We decided to go back. George declared it was impossible to find the path. So I bade him hold the horses while I found it. Then I went ahead, leading Nelly. I should have felt no fear—but for rattlesnakes, of which I knew thirty had been killed during the summer. When the path grew smooth we mounted: but my hand shook so, I could scarcely hold the bridle. It rained still, and George declared he could see nothing. So I kept the lead—telling him I could find the way by the sound of the waterfall, which I heard. But my real trust was in Nelly. We came back to the creek, which we had to cross. At first I hesitated, but Nelly did not. My feet went under water, and I thought all

was lost, but this proved to be the deepest part: we were soon safely over at the other side."

The self-reliant blind man and his well-trained horse, the courageous cleverness with which he made use of his very infirmity to guide others through the darkness which was so familiar to him—surely no one could read this little anecdote without feeling more than astonishment—admiration.

Agnes Jones was safely "caught," put behind him upon Nelly's back, and carried fifty miles, to where another little girl, Katie Fleming, was brought to meet her. A third, Lizzie Kelton, was half coaxed, half kidnapped out of the possession of a drunken father, and also carried upon Nelly's back, at first voluntarily, then "screaming and kicking"—till her adventurous captor soothed her, wrapt her in a sheepskin, fastened her with straps to his waist, and she fell asleep. Thus burdened he rode many miles on the road to Knoxville. Two more captures, Rebecca Smith and Nelly Hammondtree, did this benevolent

buccaneer succeed in making. In most cases the mothers of the children saw the advantages before them, and consented to their going to school—the fathers were more difficult to persuade. Still Mr. Campbell did persuade them all at last.

"I sent George home with the horses, and I with my little girls went by train to Dalton, Georgia, then through Chattenoga, on to Nashville. I had spent about four times the money voted to me for this tour: had it failed I should have been severely blamed. But it succeeded, and the extra sum was cheerfully paid. My little girls did well. Years afterwards, when teaching in Boston, both Lizzie Kelton and Nelly Hammondtree sent me tokens of remembrance. Each had prospered in life, and moreover each had reclaimed the drunken father who tried to prevent her going to the school."

In 1856 Mr. Campbell resigned his connection with this school—the Tennessee Institution for the Blind—and went North, to realize the dream of his life and study at Harvard University. Previously he went

to spend some months at Bridgewater. There he met a Miss Bond. In August of the same year he married her, and within a month of that day all his savings were lost, by the sudden failure of a firm to which he had entrusted them. Twenty pounds, which he happened to have in his pocket, alone remained to him—except his indomitable courage.

"Within forty-eight hours I was on my way South once more, and had accepted the musical directorship of a large and flourishing girls' school. But I had scarcely entered upon my work when a lion appeared in the path."

This was the discovery among the townsmen of his abolitionist opinions. They argued with him, abused him, even hinted at "Lynching" him. Finally they gave notice to all the parents of his pupils that the lessons must be stopped. It was vain to fight longer against the stream. Next day he and his wife departed from their home, which he did not again revisit for eighteen years.

They went first to Nashville, where the next door neighbour was a Baptist clergyman. One Monday morning they heard proceeding thence the most heartrending screams. A servant told them that when the clergyman's wife had gone to church she left two coloured girls to wash the floor, which they did badly. Being Sunday she could not whip them then, but "at four o'clock on Monday morning massa came in and whipped us dreadfully," —whipping also a boy of thirteen, recently purchased in Georgia, and unaccustomed to the cold of Nashville, where the winter was exceptionally severe.

"Poor Reuben crawled over on his hands and knees to beg for something to eat. He had been made to chop wood on his bare feet, they were horribly frost-bitten, and two of his toes had dropped off. He had received five hundred lashes that afternoon."

In an agony of indignation Mr. Campbell went to Dr. Winston, a benevolent and philanthropic man, but philanthropy failed here.

"'My young friend,' said he, laying his hand on my arm with great feeling, 'We are all in this business. If we begin, where will it end? No, no, we may wish for a different state of things, but we are powerless to bring it about.'"

Fate, however, was not powerless, but did bring about, in strange and terrible ways, the deserved end. Awful as the American Civil War was, probably nothing short of it would have accomplished the freedom of the slave.

Mr. Campbell had nothing to do with that fighting, his own battle of life being hard enough. He got temporary work at the Wisconsin Institution for the Blind, then he had to leave it and bring his wife for medical help to Boston. "At this time," he says, "we were so poor that my own food never cost me more than sixpence a day." He was in a strange city—his wife placed as a private patient in a hospital, and himself seeking everywhere for work.

"One day I resolved to visit the Perkins Institution for the Blind. It was four miles off. I had to walk

and find my way. Broadway is a long street, the Institution was still a mile off. I knew the side walk was broad, and the cross streets ran at right angles. So exact had been my information that, when I felt the iron fence of the Institution, I was able to walk up the stone steps and ring the bell. I asked for Dr. Howe, the principal. When he came he inquired if I was partially blind, 'No, totally so.' 'But I have been watching you up Broadway. You avoided the trees and the people, you walked up and rang the bell; surely you can see light?' I replied by taking off my glasses. He was satisfied."

After a day spent in examining the Institution, especially the musical department, Dr. Howe asked his visitor what he thought of it. Mr. Campbell's answer was wholly unsatisfactory. Music had been a total failure in the school—he did not wonder at this—and he explained the reasons. An experiment was proposed to supersede the former teacher and give Mr. Campbell his position, at half his salary; this the spirited young fellow refused.

"The doctor urged that the public would not

allow him to pay a blind man as much as a sighted man. 'But,' I said, 'you employ me because you think I should do better than a sighted man. I will not be underpaid, but if you like I will teach one term for nothing.' Which having got some private pupils, I was now able to do. So it was settled that the experiment should be tried."

It succeeded perfectly. Mr. Campbell was formally established on his own terms. These included two revolutionary movements—the abolition of all the old worn-out pianos—as it was impossible "to make bricks without straw," and permission to choose twenty boys and girls to be educated, physically and intellectually as well as musically, according to his wishes.

"The first one sent up to me was a musical prodigy. But he did not know the multiplication table, and as he had been at school several years, I declined him. Many others came with the same result. At last I said, 'Send me the best boy at mathematics;" and Thomas Roche came and gave me without hesitation a beautiful demonstration of

the square of the hypotenuse. 'Thomas,' said I, 'you will do; would you like to study music?' 'Yes, Sir, but I have no ear, I have been turned out of the musical department.' 'Never mind!' and I told him my own story. He became my pupil, and ten years after, at his death this same Thomas Roche left a good sum of money, his own earnings by teaching music, to the Perkins Institution. My nineteen others were scarcely less successful."

Certainly, could any mortal command success, this imperious fighter against hard fortune seems to have done it. Possibly he comes from the old Campbell race, the Highland chieftains whose blood is so blue that when his heir lately married a Queen's daughter, there were those who considered that the Royal family was the one honoured by the alliance! But of his birth I can say nothing: for this self-dependent, self-made man seems entirely to ignore his grandfathers and great-grandfathers. It is a not ignoble pride to be proud of one's ancestors; but it is a nobler pride to make our descendants proud of us.

Mr. Campbell was now fairly established at Boston.

"My greatest difficulty there," he writes, "as it has been in all my experience, was the low physical condition of the blind. In their education every effort should be made to supply this deficiency. Else their ambition and confidence will always be much below that of the average student. It is useless to say to the blind 'Go!'—the word must be 'Come!' Therefore I used to take my boys daily to swim in the open sea. Also we went long rowing expeditions. Once we chartered a schooner, and went far out to sea, fishing. I led a party of them up Mount Mansfield, and another up Mount Washington. A Southerner myself, I had never been on the ice. In my first winter at Boston I learnt to skate, and insisted on my boys learning too. But in the winter of 1861 my lungs became affected. Dr. Howe urged a sea-voyage to South America: telling me that otherwise I should not live a year. This news had the contrary effect from what my advisers anticipated. If my life was to be short, I felt I must do as much in it as possible. I resumed, and even increased my outdoor sports. I took the precaution of having an open fire, avoiding the hot

air of the Boston stoves, and that was all. Praise be to God, instead of a year of life, He has given me twenty—and may give me twenty more, to work in behalf of the blind."

In this spirit, no wonder the man worked, and worked well. His eleven years' connection with the Perkins Institution was an entire success. His energy and activity never failed. But the history and working of this noted Institution are well known in America, and to repeat the details in England is unnecessary.

During the winter of 1868—9, Mr. Campbell's health again broke down. Added to his incessant labours were domestic trials of the severest kind. His wife had become a confirmed invalid. Often he had to work all day, come home and sit up all night, fulfilling the duties of sick-nurse. But of these sorrows he seldom speaks, nor is there any need to speak. Dr. Howe and the trustees urged him to go to Europe for a year, promising to continue his salary the while. The Harvard Musical Association of Boston gave a grand

concert and presented him with the proceeds. Everyone seemed glad to help in his need a man who had helped himself, and many others, to the utmost of his power.

So in August 1869, Mr. Campbell, with his wife and son, sailed from New York to Liverpool. Though only in that town a few hours, he contrived to visit the Institution for the Blind there: and noticed, with perhaps pardonable pride, that the amount of intelligence among the pupils seemed less than in America. His travels, ostensibly for health, were continually used for purposes of study; every kind of study that could help on the great work of his life, the amelioration of the condition of the blind.

"I arrived at Leipzig about the middle of October, where by the kindness of Professor Moscheles and others, I was allowed the freedom of the Conservatoire, and could spend as much time as I chose in the classes of any or all of the professors. After six months I went on to Berlin, and became a private pupil of Professor Theodore Kullack, whose Con-

servatoire, and that of Carl Tausig, I also attended. My object was to study thoroughly the method of teaching pursued in these various establishments."

To teach music being, as Mr. Campbell explained when he chose his class of twenty at the Perkins Institute, a very different thing, and requiring different qualifications from being a musical genius, composer or performer. For this part of the profession, the exceeding thoroughness necessary in the education of the blind, when properly educated, is a great advantage. At first sight, the idea that a capacity for understanding the square of the hypotenuse should help a man in teaching music, seems ridiculous. But real musicians who know what an exact science their beloved art is—or ought to be made, will think differently. And it is noticeable in how many persons, as in Mr. Campbell, the faculty for mathematics and music, as well as the love of both, is combined. Many admirable organists, and one composer, Dr. G. A. Macfarren, have

proved that it is possible for the blind to master the utmost difficulties of musical science. But they must do it by an amount of patience, perseverance, and sound instruction, both on their own side and their teachers', double to what is required from sighted persons.

Also their education is much more expensive. Raised maps, raised books—everything that must necessarily be acquired by the sense of touch only—cost money, and a great deal of money: Mr. Campbell travelled from city to city—informing himself on all these points: studying all the various systems, so as to be able when he returned to carry on his work not only on satisfactory but economical principles. Having learnt everywhere as much as he possibly could, and regained a fair amount of health with which to put his experience to use, he turned his thoughts homewards, and began—as he supposed—his journey back to America; reaching London on the 21st January, 1871—exactly ten

years from this day on which I am writing! Looking back, it seems as marvellous a ten years' work as any man ever accomplished. It has been—not the work which he had proposed to do—but another work in another land. Thus it came about—by that which some call chance and others Providence.

"On the first day of our arrival in London a gentleman at the hotel happened to say he was going to a blind tea-meeting. I accompanied him. Till then I never felt the overpowering sadness of blindness—helpless, not helpful blindness. There must have been between three and four hundred persons present, led by their wives, their children, hired guides, or dogs. The food was good—the kindness great. But the whole thing seemed unreal. I heard the blind recipients express their gratitude for their blessings, but there seemed an undercurrent of feeling which, could it have been put into words, would have implied: 'Why am I thus?' On talking with many of them, I satisfied myself that by proper training these miserable objects of charity might have been made self-sustaining, useful members of society. I went home and spent a sleepless night. Next

morning I told my wife that we should not sail as planned, and arranged with the Inman line to extend our tickets."

His next step was to deliver one of his two letters of introduction. This was to Dr. Armitage—well known for his interest in the blind, and his devotion of life and fortune to the amelioration of their condition. For some months the two gave their combined energies to the investigation of Blind Institutions, hoping to introduce new methods of instruction. Being unsuccessful they boldly started an experimental school, taking for it three small houses in Paxton Terrace, opposite the Low Level station of the Crystal Palace—the same where I first found Mr. Campbell and his little flock.

"This was in February 1872. On March 1st we received two pupils, little boys from Leeds, and began our school as a private family. But by the middle of May we had received so many that we had to organise regular school-work, under two lady-teachers, Miss Green and Miss Faulkner, and a piano-tuner, Mr.

J. W. Smith. Besides all my other work, I managed to give the musical instruction myself."

Single-handed—as indeed his whole life has been, Mr. Campbell carried out his system, and with such marvellous success that at the two years' end he felt justified in trying for a much larger house, on the top of the hill. In the midst of these plans, his wife's long sufferings were ended. She died in August, 1873, leaving him a son, now a fine young fellow, who from childhood has been to his father everything that the poor mother could not be. But private sorrows should never hinder public work, and did not.

"I was resolved," says Mr. Campbell, "that before the two years' experiment was ended, broad foundations should be laid for permanent usefulness. The Duke, then Marquis, of Westminster came down to me one afternoon to look over the Mount and hear all reasons for and against it. When he left he offered to give £1,000 towards the purchase of it."

From such a generous beginning other help

followed, and by October in the same year Mr. Campbell had migrated, with all his pupils, to the house which formed the nucleus of what is now the Royal Normal College for the Blind, Westow Street, Upper Norwood.

Its history is public property, and its advantages can be investigated by all who choose to visit it. A most pleasant, comfortable, and picturesque building; with excellent class-rooms, a fine music-hall, a garden, a play-ground and gymnasium, a lake, used for swimming in summer and skating in winter, workshops of several kinds, especially for the tuning and even making of pianos—all this has grown out of the small school in Paxton Terrace, and through the indomitable perseverance, energy, and "pluck" of one man —the little Tennessee lad who was mourned over as "poor blind Joseph."

Lastly, and I am glad to add this, since however heroic and successful as a man's work in the world may be, a lonely man, or a man who "carries a stone in his heart," must

always be a rather sad picture—within the grounds of the College is a separate little house, where a very different picture may be seen. In the summer of 1874, Mr. Campbell, revisiting his native land, again met Miss Faulkner, an American young lady who had been one of the two teachers at the beginning of the Paxton Terrace School, having joined in the work with all her heart, and only left it when recalled home by the illness of her father. They once more took counsel together upon the question which had been the great interest of both their lives, went over various Blind Institutions and compared experiences. After a pleasant sojourn, during which he revisited many familiar places, including his old home, from which he had been absent so many years, Mr. Campbell returned to England, and recommenced his work. But he soon found, as he simply and touchingly puts it, "that he could not work alone." He once more sailed to America, and brought back Miss Faulkner as his wife.

Since then all has prospered with him and his work, in which he and his help-mate go hand-in-hand. She still teaches as well as he, and self-reliant as he is, her bright, active, intelligent aid as well as that of his eldest son by his first marriage, is not unwelcome to this happy and independent blind man, who goes about among his sighted family as capable as any of them all. Capable not only of work but enjoyment, for with his son, his constant companion, he has done no end of travelling, in Switzerland especially. He has even climbed Mont Blanc, being the first blind man who ever accomplished that feat. How far it was a wise or desirable feat, opinions differ: but it served the one great purpose of his life, the "light in darkness" which he has carried everywhere about with him: passing it on like a beacon-fire from hill to hill with the watchword, not so much "Help us!" as "Help us to help ourselves."

The extent to which he has taught his pupils to help themselves, is incredible except

to those who witness it. Starting on the principle that the blind should be encouraged from the very first to do as much as they can for themselves, to consider themselves not as aliens from ordinary life and education, but able to acquire, though of course with greater difficulty, almost everything that other children can acquire, to work as they work, and play as they play, he has succeeded in making his school not merely a blind school, where everything must be regarded with pitying reservations—but one where the standard of education can compete with that of any similar establishment in the country.

In music especially. I lately sat and listened to a lesson he gave his choir, a five-part chorus out of "The Woman of Samaria," which they tried for the first time. He read it to them bar by bar, they wrote it down by the Braille system of notation, and sang it "at sight," as we say; each separate part, and then the whole, with scarcely an error. Afterwards, just for my pleasure, and their own,

he made them sing another chorus out of the same work, newly learnt, which they gave with a purity of intonation, and accuracy of musical reading, quite remarkable. Also, with such an evident pleasure in this, the greatest gift that blind people can use, for themselves and the world—the power of making music. Watching those rows of sightless faces of all ages, and listening to the exquisitely beautiful voices of some of them, the words they sang, which happen to be "In Thy light shall we see light," became less a despair than a hope, even in this world.

Hope and courage, are indeed the ruling elements in the Normal College. It is not a charity: everybody pays, or is paid for, a fair and fixed sum like any ordinary boarding-school. Nevertheless the history of the Institution contains many a sealed page, which its Principal will not allow me to open; stories of forlorn children rescued—some even from the workhouse—and educated, gratis, into useful independence; of young women made

capable of maintaining not only themselves, but their parents; of young men helped to emigrate, and carrying out a happy and successful life in the colonies. As vocalists, music-teachers, and piano-tuners, the pupils year by year go out into the world, and earn their honest independent bread. "In fact," said Mr. Campbell to me, "in all these ten years we have only had four failures, two because they came to us too old to learn, and two, because they"—with a hesitating smile—"began going to the public-house."

This is one of Mr. Campbell's "crotchets," as one half the world might consider it, but the other half know that it is one of the strongest guarantees for the success of his work. He allows no drink of any sort to enter the college. Tobacco also is forbidden. Therefore all smokers and wine-bibbers are kept safely out of that peaceful domain.

Besides his American temperance, he carries out the principle of American democracy. No class-distinctions are allowed. All ranks work

together; play together; subject to the same regulations. But, to obviate many difficulties that might arise from this plan, he never takes any pupil without a three months' trial, and remorselessly refuses any "black sheep" who morally or socially might corrupt the rest.

The system pursued in his large, busy, happy family—still a family—I shall not attempt to enter into. It is explained in Reports, and visitors can go and see its working for themselves. "Busy"—"happy," those two essential necessities, he tries to make them all. "If we work," one of his pupils said to me, "we are all right with Mr. Campbell. But if we don't work"—an ominous pause. Yes! I could imagine the rest. Unlucky position! to be drone in that hive.

It reminds one of a hive—with its "murmur of innumerable bees." The piano-tuning—the practising, vocal and instrumental—which goes on incessantly: the hum of the class-

rooms—the chattering, shouting, and laughing of the playgrounds—verily, these blind young people are neither deaf nor dumb. Their frolics last Christmas were wonderful! There was a grand Christmas tree, and afterwards all sighted visitors were blindfolded—"to make things equal," as Mr. Campbell said with a smile. "And didn't we have fun!"

Besides fun, he gives to his pupils the blessing of usefulness. An earnestly religious man, though with no sectarian bias, Mr. Campbell opens his fine music-hall every Sunday evening after church service is over, and admits to it by tickets all the poor of the neighbourhood. Cabmen, mechanics, labourers, of which there are so many connected with the Crystal Palace close by, come regularly with their wives and families, to have an hour of sacred music — ending with the Lord's Prayer and a very short address on some sacred subject. Nothing prosy—nothing doctrinal—yet something which all can listen to; and a hymn in which all are bid to join—"singing

with melody in their hearts to the Lord." The good that this may do—the numbers who may be kept out of the publichouses of a Sunday night by "going to hear the blind folks sing"—there is no need to enlarge upon.

Nor indeed have I space to say any more. My "subject" has, let us hope, a long life before him yet. A happy life, with his wife at his side, and his children growing up around him. I will not break the sanctities of private life by describing his home, or his life therein, except by one word—in which was put briefly the substance of all I have written here, and the purpose of all I meant to write.

"Mrs. Campbell," I said to her one day, "your husband is an exceedingly clever man."

"No," she answered, "he is not cleverer than many other men. But the difference between him and all other people I ever knew, is this—*he makes use of all his opportunities.*"

If only we all did the same!

AN ISLAND OF THE BLEST.

AN ISLAND OF THE BLEST.

"Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow;
Nor ever wind blows loudly: but it lies
Deep-meadowed, happy: fair with orchard-lawns,
And bowery hollows crowned with summer sea."

TENNYSON.

"VEDERE Napoli e poi morir." And I truly believe I should have died, had we stayed many days longer in that most abominable of cities, which, despite its lovely position, seated queen-like, with head on the hill-tops and feet in the blue Mediterranean, and blessed with a climate the most heavenly in Europe, will always rest upon my mind as a place to be fled from, almost as Lot fled from the Cities of the Plain.

Imagine the worst population of the worst dens in Paris, London, Glasgow, Edinburgh, degraded to the lowest depth that misery and vice, acting and re-acting upon one another, can degrade. A race, ugly, stunted, diseased, deformed, not pent up within its own quarters, but sweeping like a flood through all the streets—streets where everybody drives; no decent person ever attempts to walk—picture this, and you have a faint conception of the miserable, beautiful, diabolical city, of which a friend who had long known it said to me sorrowfully the other day, "that the best wish he could have for Naples was, to become a second Pompeii in a new eruption of Vesuvius."

Yet there she sits, as sat Neapolis of old, in view of the same magnificent bay, the same gracefully-curved mountain with its slender spiral of white smoke curling innocently into the intense blue sky; and the easy-minded folk who travel *en prince* and see all things in Naples, mundane or moral, from the point of

view of the Hôtel Bristol, go away saying that it is the most charming place in the world! But to anyone who possesses what has been called "the enthusiasm of humanity" —who has a keen sense of the humanness of travel—of the pleasure of observing, meditating upon, and taking an interest in one's fellow-creatures, noting the points of difference as well as of unity, and coming to the tender conclusion that they are our fellow-creatures after all—to such a one this lovely city is one of the saddest cities under God's sun.

We fled from it, even though it was into a mist almost as dense as that into which historians tells us the wretched Pompeians fled when the burning mountain drove them into the sea, and the heaving sea threw them back upon the land. On the quay—alas! I shall never hear that exquisite song, "Santa Lucia," without catching in memory a whiff of the abominable odour of the Chiaja—on the quay one could scarcely see ten yards ahead. The Bay of Naples, with all its magnificent views,

had totally disappeared. The little steamer bound for Capri was half-invisible. Beyond it stretched an impenetrable, not blackness, but whiteness, shrouding the entire sea-world, and extending a good way up into the clouds. Such a fog, the Neapolitans told us, had not been seen here for more than twenty years.

Still, since the Capri boat was starting, a friend advised us to risk everything and start with her. For though she was advertised to sail daily, she very seldom did. The slightest hindrance, such as a not-sufficient complement of passengers, or an unpropitious wind which would hinder the said passengers from entering the Blue Grotto, or even a slight breeze so as to make their voyage unpleasant, is always enough to detain these fair-weather sailors. What would they think of our sailors and our steamboats, which go ploughing in any weather through our stormy northern seas?

This sea was calm, at any rate; a perfect duck-pond. We traversed it blindly, not seeing

more than a few yards before us, yet with the aggravating knowledge that on every side was the wonderful scenery of that wonderful bay. We had to imagine everything, for nothing could we behold. However, we had our distractions in the shape of some more than ordinarily queer tourists, and a wandering vocalist, who sang "Santa Lucia" and various other Neapolitan ballads in a sweet tenor voice, and with skill and expression that would have done credit to many finished singers. Truly, Italians seem born to sing, like their own nightingales. But they cannot work as we can. The *dolce far niente* penetrates their inmost souls; even if they do contrive to do something, it is done slowly, lazily, desultorily. An English or Scotch steamboat would have made the voyage in an hour. We started, or were supposed to start, at half-past eight, yet it was nearly noon, and we had not reached our "Island of the Blest," the name enthusiastic travellers give to Capri.

But had I not better say a word about that island? for it is astonishing how little many people know of it till they actually go there.

Capri is an enormous rock, probably of volcanic origin, dropped in the middle of the Bay of Naples. Between it and the nearest point of the mainland, Sorrento, is a bocca, or mouth, narrow enough to row across; that is, in calm weather. But, when the sea is rough—and the smiling Mediterranean is subject to sudden and fearful storms—the little island is as completely shut off from communication with its continent as was the fabled Atlantis, the real "Island of the Blest." You can go and return in a single day—as I said, the Neapolitan navigators always choose the finest of fine days, and will not sail on any other; but if you stay longer than a day, you may chance to stay a good deal longer still. Close as it looks to Naples, and easy as the passage seems, it is a difficult place to get to, and a still more difficult place

to get away from—if any body ever could wish to get away from Capri!

Tiberius did not. Its most prominent peak —Timberio—a corruption of his name—is still covered with the remains of the largest of the twelve villas which he is said to have built here. And as, the mist melting away, we see the island rising like a flower out of the smooth expanse of sea, we wonder not that the luxurious old Emperor loved it so in his latter days; or that his predecessor, Augustus, who exchanged Ischia for it, and only enjoyed it two years, was equally devoted to this insular Paradise. There surely peace might be found, if it could ever be found in this world, by either bad men or good men. Which these old Romans were, whether better or worse than their descendants, who can decide? The stories told us of King Bomba at Naples parallel the traditions left by Tiberius in Capri.

Both are alike indifferent to us now, as we sit on deck, penetrated through and through

by the brightest of sunshine, though it is only the first week of March, and watch the boat stop, and a few enterprising tourists descend to the Blue Grotto—called by some "one of the wonders of the world."

On seeing it some days afterwards we rather doubted that fact. It is merely a huge vaulted chamber, floored with heaving sea-water, of an intense blue, and lit by daylight which enters through a low arch, under which you can only pass by lying down flat in your boat, when the sea is calm. A true mermaid's cave, very curious and beautiful, if it could be seen in solitude; but when boat-load after boat-load of vociferous tourists enters, filling it with a confused jabber of French, German, English, and American (there is a difference), mingled with the shrill Italian of the small boy who persists in wanting to dive that you may see the colour of the blue water upon flesh—then all the imaginary mermaids flee away, and the Blue Grotto becomes a very ordinary "wonder of the world" indeed.

There is a green grotto on the other side of the island—indeed, there are grottos and caves without number all round it, and, as we now clearly see, its perpendicular cliffs rise sheer out of the sea to the height of several hundred feet. Nowhere, save in the north-west coast of Ireland—it is strange how far we travel, leaving unseen grander beauty close at home—nowhere else have I ever beheld such rocks. Except for its two landing-places, the Marina Grande and the Piccola Marina, the lovely island stands absolutely inaccessible, protected by natural fortresses against the whole outside world.

The Capri "world" into which we are now coming seems wholly composed of women and donkeys. The tiny quay is thronged by them, shouting, screaming, gesticulating —I mean the women—their four-footed companions standing meekly beside. They are of all ages, from the wrinkled crone, so familiar a sight in Italy, yellow, skinny, toothless, yet with much regularity of features, and a

ghostly gleam of long-faded beauty glittering in her dark eyes, down to the young girl of thirteen, just budding into what her grandmother once was.

Capri women are renowned for their good looks, and truly. It is said that Tiberius's thousand slaves, chosen mostly for their beauty, have left behind in the island distinct types thereof — Greek, Roman, and even Egyptian. I saw more than one face which might have made a study for a Cleopatra or a Sphynx; and the colouring, pure warm brown, almost olive, with the wholesome blood coursing under it, was something marvellous. All beauty is delightful, but human beauty, and of a kind so rare, is the best of all. We forgot everything in the mere pleasure of gazing, till reminded that we had still a mile and more to reach our hotel, and there were no carriages, no roads, nothing but a steep path, and one's own two feet, or the four feet of some equally patient but much stronger animal.

But the journey has to be done, and so we do it; at first walking, then thankfully condescending—or ascending—to the back of a donkey, which, led by an old woman and driven from behind by a small boy, succeeds in mounting what looked at first like climbing the side of a house. Soon, a long procession follows, chiefly composed of women, each carrying on her head a passenger's luggage —portmanteau, bag, or box—sometimes of size and weight quite startling. But there is apparently no other form of porterage, and these girls, accustomed to it from earliest youth, seem to hesitate at nothing. However their occupation has stunted their growth and spoiled their figures. Beautiful as their faces are, we could not find one tall or graceful woman among them.

Yet they seem so happy, so merry; laughing and chattering in that absolutely unintelligible Caprese, intermixed with a few words of Italian or French for the benefit of the *forestieri*. By the time we arrive at what

seems the hill-top—a small town, with a tiny piazza, and two or three narrow passages, politely called streets, which constitute the great metropolis of Capri—we feel quite friendly with them all.

We have our choice between two hotels —Pagano, German and artistic, and Quisisana, mostly chosen by families, especially those who come to winter here. We prefer the latter, where we shortly find ourselves "at home." Strange how one gets to use the word, even an hotel, which has anything of comfort in it.

This one had. We determined not to die, but to live; only too glad we had come alive out of Naples. From the window of our bright and pleasant room we could look upon such a landscape—and seascape! Old Tiberius, with his jaded eyes and sick heart—if he ever had a heart—must have been refreshed by it.

But why attempt to describe an Island of the Blest, which is so easy to behold—being only five days' journey from this dear

old foggy, rainy, chilly island of ours? Yet what a change! From sunless skies and leafless trees to a climate warm, clear, and bright; the blue heavens above and the blue sea below rivalling each other in their intensity of colour. Vegetation, new and strange, is already waking up into spring beauty. There are whole gardens of peach-blossom decking the southern slopes, and all up the hill-side to the little chapel which crowns the height they call Timberio, rise terrace after terrace of grey-green olives. Below, in the hotel garden, are great acanthus plants and newly-budded vines, ready to cover the trellissed walls—which in summer will be so cool and lovely. And, they say, the wild flowers are everywhere abundant, and as beautiful as those of Switzerland.

It is *l'embarras de richesses;* but finally we decide, like Ulysses, to follow the sunset, which hides itself behind Anacapri, on the other side of the island. So, after an hour's rest, off we start again.

This village of Anacapri is a curious place. Though only a few miles distant from the landing-place and town of Capri, there was till lately no road, and almost no communication, between the two. It is said also there were almost no inter-marriages; the Anacapri folk being a distinct and much rougher race, from whom the Capri fishers and Capri girls shrank even as they now shrink from the Neapolitans. To go to Naples! to marry a Neapolitan!—more than one Capri damsel said to us, with an unmistakable shudder—"she would never think of such a thing."

Nature is delightful; but still more so is human nature. Lovely as the view was—a succession of perfect pictures, as we mounted in zigzags up the newly-made road, catching at each turn something fresh to look at—still, I own, my attention was divided between this and the girl who led my donkey, with her bright, frank, handsome face, her dark eyes, and her masses of blue-black hair, fastened

with a bodkin of coral. Great was her anxiety that "la Signora" should sit comfortably—a difficult matter; as the steep gradients gave the possibility of alternately slipping over the animal's head or his tail; and many were her assurances as to what an excellent animal he was, this poor "Giacomo"—I think that was his name—how sure-footed, patient, and intelligent.

From discourse about the donkey we passed on to more confidential conversation; though Italian was evidently an effort to her, and the best Tuscan scholar alive could not have made out her Caprese! Still we managed to exchange much information. She told me her name, how old she was, and how she had been long "promessa" to a coral-fisher, who was now away with the coral-boats off Algiers, but would come back in the autumn and marry her. In return, she questioned me categorically as to where my house was, how big a house I had, and how many children—showing the same vivid interest in my affairs

that she evidently expected me to take in hers.

So did another woman, less handsome and young, but comely still, who next day led my donkey up the steep heights to Timberio—enlivening the way by ceaseless conversation about her husband, who was also absent at the coral-fishing, and her three children, the youngest of whom was only twenty days old.

"But we must work, we women, while all our men are away. They go off in spring, after the padre has blessed the boats, and they seldom come back till autumn. Then the young men marry, if they have made money enough, and the husbands settle down for the winter. That woman there," nodding to one who sat at the roadside, "has got no husband and no children, so she can afford to be idle."

I noticed that this exceptional person looked rather less healthy and strong than her neighbours.

"Oh! she is getting old, that is all. We grow old and die, of course; but we are never ill. Nobody is ever ill at Capri."

Which fact—and I afterwards found it really was such, so far as regarded the natives—is corroborated, or else accounted for, by another fact—that there is only one doctor on the island.

An "island of the blest," truly, where disease finds it hard to enter, and death comes softly and kindly as the fitting close of life. Still he does come—for we saw the little Protestant cemetery, "Il cimiterio degli animali," as the islanders call it. But if called "animals," when dead, their heretic visitors are kindly regarded while alive. My young donkey-driver seemed to know and sympathize with every invalid among the little knot of English who had wintered that year at Capri.

For Capri is, as might be expected, a favourite health resort. Such places have always a certain melancholy about them; a

sad *arrière pensée* running through all their external beauty and social pleasantness. Even in our agreeable table d'hôte pathetic little remarks fell occasionally. "Oh, yes! I have been here since November. I was ordered to do nothing for several months; but it is rather hard work." (Alas! no wonder). Or, "I have been so disappointed to-day; I got a letter from my husband at home, and the doctor will not allow me to go back to London before June," &c., &c.

Nevertheless ours was a merry table, surrounded by faces anything but sickly or discontented: for in this heavenly climate there is scarcely a day when the most delicate invalid need fear to go out. Now and then comes one of those sudden, brief Mediterranean storms, and snow is seen, afar off, on the hill-tops of the mainland; but at Capri, all winter, it had been permanent delicious sunshine. And on this side of the island, neither east nor north winds are ever known. Sheltered in safe sunshiny places, one

may creep about, from November to March, as happy as a fly on a south wall.

Those who have known what it is to look forward to winter, feeling that for months at a time the mere breath of life will be a pain to draw, and the slightest change of temperature will become a permanent dread—can understand why it is that I call Capri an island of the blest.

Several of us *forestieri* who started next day, half on donkeys, half on foot, to mount the steep ascent of Timberio, would, had we been in England at the same date, never have stirred out of doors, or at best have taken a ten minutes' crawl on the sunny side of the street, supposing there was any sunshine to be found. But here it blazed about us and around us, warming us through and through; even a little too warm, as the younger ones protested they were being "baked alive." But to the elders, that delicious Italian air, dry and soft, yet mingled with a bracing salt-sea freshness, felt as near the airs

of Paradise as anything could be in this world.

It cheered us on, talking and laughing—none of us thinking about ourselves at all, which is the utmost blessing for invalids—mounting step by step the very serious ascent—or we should have thought it such in England—through narrow walled lanes, probably built of the *débris* of old Tiberian houses, and past vineyards, where the trellis-work was set upon stone columns, with capitals of rare beauty, which may have adorned some one of the twelve villas said to have existed on the island.

In truth, for people of artistic, historic, or archæological tendencies, Capri offers a field of endless interest and research. Every inch of ground hides relics of its ancient inhabitants—Greek, Roman, and Mediæval. The Hellenic colonists, who have left both here and along the mainland so many fragments of a most perfect civilisation, of which the temples of Pæstum are examples; the luxurious Emperors,

Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula; the pirates of the middle ages, who made their stronghold here, and were a terror to the whole Mediterranean coast—all these have planted their feet on dainty little Capri with an impress never to be obliterated. The traditions concerning them and their marvellous handiworks are a ceaseless curiosity and delight, especially to those who feel that the past has a certain charm in it which nothing modern ever possesses.

Travelling invalids who rejoice in grand hotels, in dressing, and dining, and promenading, had certainly better not come to Capri. Nice, Mentone, and Monaco are much more after their pattern. But wanderers who are sufficient to themselves, who can settle down in a place, do their own work, and find their own amusements, without being dependent on any external entertainment, might spend here week after week, and month after month, and always find something new.

A whole week instead of half a day, might have been occupied in examining this villa of Tiberius. It must have extended all over the hill, now terraced with olives, almost every terrace being formed upon what was once a house-roof; doubtless some habitation of the numerous slaves. On the hill-top dwelt the luxurious master. Portions of his domestic chambers, the stables, the large reservoirs for water, the theatre, still remain, easily recognisable by those acquainted with ancient Roman architecture.

How grand and solid this must have been, and how different from our own, no one can travel in Italy without perceiving. We build for a lease of ninety-nine years—but they built for ever; both outside the earth and under it. The mosaic pavement of the sloping road down which the slaves used to carry in litters the Emperor and his guests to the sea-baths, of which huge fragments of masonry still remain; the arches of an underground chamber, discovered by a proprietor lately in

building his house, and built into it, with the cool appropriation and amalgamation of old and new, which is in Italy so amusing—and so sad; everything is solid, large, substantial, indicating a degree of civilisation equal or superior to our own.

Chambers underground, and long passages, are said to exist everywhere, honey-combing the hill, and communicating between the villa of Tiberius and other points of the island. And below the whole town of Capri—which needs it sorely!—there is supposed to be a complete system of Roman drainage, on the principle of the Cloacæ Maximæ, which, if any enterprising engineer would find and make use of, he would confer a lasting benefit on the little community.

The dread of fever, which had haunted us every step in Naples, fled away like a shadow as we stood on the breezy top of Timberio, looking down on the *bocca* between it and Sorrento, as Augustus must often have looked, watching the wheat-ships sailing in

from Alexandria. And here, too, Tiberius sat and gazed, in an agony of suspense, upon that tiny dot on the blue sea, the galley which he knew bore to him the news of the result of his letter, suggesting the deposition of Sejanus. From this solitary island-peak the cruel, clever Emperor governed, or fancied he governed, the whole world.

If a highly civilised, it was at heart a wholly demoralised and brutal world. That precipice, several hundred feet of sheer perpendicular rock, with foaming, boiling sea at the bottom —we look down it shuddering, and wonder whether Tiberius did really cast thence his offending slaves, as tradition says. And what was the truth about the human sacrifices in that temple of Minerva, or the other one of Neptune, of which, scanning intently the mainland, we can still see some fragmentary columns? As we gaze upon the same view that must have met all these long-dead eyes, centuries of history seem to pass before us; centuries wherein this tiny

island was the heart of the civilised world. The past grows strangely real, and the present dwindles down, till one's own generation seems a span as short as that of the flowers—violets, anemones, cyclamen, that deck the hill-side—as they have decked it for hundreds of years, just springing up and perishing in a day. Yet while they last, how sweet they are!

And how sweet was existence at this minute, in spite of the ghost of old Tiberius and the story of his cruelties!

"Would the signora like to see a tarantella danced?" asked the girl who had shown us the fatal rock, duly throwing a stone down and counting the seconds—oh, so many!—till it plunged into the water below. Her black eyes glittered as if she were glad of any possible excuse for dancing, as the signora certainly was for enjoying the sight of it, or anything else that was pleasant in this most delectable country.

So within five minutes there was collected a joyous quartette—two girls, a boy of twelve,

and an old man, whom they fetched from his work in the vineyard below. He threw down his spade and pruning-knife, and began to foot it as lightly and cleverly as any of the young ones.

Most tourists know the tarantella—that most picturesque and dramatic dance—the delight of the Italian peasants, and for which they seem ready at all times, as the Irish are for a jig, and the Highlanders for a reel. It is danced, I believe, especially well at Capri. Here, accompanied by the so-called "music" of an old woman on the tambourine, it was very effective, and great was the enjoyment of the performers.

"Oh, yes; I like dancing. I have danced all my life," said the old man, sitting down, hot and breathless, but not by any means exhausted. "I was sixty-eight last May, and I have had eleven children. Four of them are dead, but seven are alive still. And I am strong; I can work among the vines still, and I can dance, too, as the signora may observe."

Then wiping his brows and re-arranging his shirt-sleeves, the honest old fellow made us his adieux with that sweet Italian courtesy so pleasant and so universal, and descended again to his vines.

Innocent as gay seems to be life in Capri. But it was not always so. In the time of King Bomba, many of the political *sospetti* of Naples used to be exiled here, "requested" to spend a few months, or years, at Capri, where they were under as careful surveillance as Napoleon at Elba. Many stories are still current of that reign of terror, so little distant from our own times, yet recording tyrannies as black as those of the Roman emperors.

Two true stories were told us while leaning on the low wall of the piazza, watching the lilac glow of the unseen sunset, which coloured the lovely curving coast, Sorrento, Castellamare, Pompeii, Torre del Greco, up to Naples itself. Naples looking so beautiful in the distance, the Palace and the Castle of Elmo crowning its heights.

Yet in Bomba's time curious things used to happen in that said palace. Once His Majesty entertained at dinner a particular friend, *i.e.*, a suspected enemy; bade him an affectionate *addio*, and courteously accompanied him to the very door. There, just outside it, he found himself seized by the police.

"Impossible!" cried the unfortunate. "I have just dined with the King—have only this instant parted from His Majesty."

"Nevertheless here is His Majesty's warrant for the Castle of St. Elmo." Which the prisoner entered that night, and never quitted more.

There was another story, which I shall always think of in remembering that pretty little piazza and its innocent shops, where one never could get anything one wanted, and where the extraordinary muddle of languages —English and German, Italian and French—over doors and in windows, was rather bewildering.

Two *sospetti*, honourable, respectable, professional men, received orders to quit Naples for Capri. There they remained for many months, living the simplest of lives, and apparently not even acquainted with one another, though supposed to be friends and political conspirators. At last, when suspicion had almost ceased, one more plan was tried against them. An old woman came rushing in to Signor A——, imploring him to come at once, secretly, to his friend Signor B——, who was dying. Signor A—— went, to find it all a ruse, and himself seized and imprisoned. The two gentlemen were afterwards publicly whipped in this little quiet piazza—one so severely that he very soon died.

Besides these tragedies, the memory of which even the wholesome sway of the "Rè galantuomo" and the hopes of "Italia unita" cannot yet take away, there is many a romantic story current in this romantic island. Love-stories, of course, principally.

The extreme beauty of the women, and their high character for purity and faithfulness—alas! in the few cases when the devil has entered this Eden, he has come in the shape of a "foreign" gentleman—also the isolation of the place, removed from the bad influences of the mainland, make Capri a spot which, until quite lately, was as primitive and patriarchal as could be desired. One scarcely wondered to hear that more than one stranger —Englishmen especially—had taken to himself a Capri wife, and settled down, like Æneas in Latium, safe from the storms of the world. And when we looked at the fine faces of the wives gradually waking up into intelligence, helped by the natural grace and refinement which seem inherent in Italian blood; or watched the "dusky brood," brown-skinned, active, healthy, ready for any amount of wholesome English culture in years to come, we were tempted to believe that, after all, these rash *forestieri* might have done worse—even for themselves.

Mixed marriages are always a certain risk; but I have known many between Italians and English turn out very happy. There seems a natural affinity, or a harmony in contrariety, between the two races, which often works well, and the combined qualities result in a most satisfactory third generation. Capri, by-and-by, may owe much to its immigrants who bring English influence, beneficial English influence—would that it were always such!—to this simple people, and gradually put into their affectionate, passionate natures the quiet perseverance, the stern truthfulness, and the absolute probity of the North. Then, too, will come a sense of dignity and necessity of education, so that future visitors may not receive such an answer as I got, when asking whether I should write out the list of clothes for the wash in French or Italian. "Oh, whichever the signora pleases. It is only for her own amusement. Nobody here can read or write; it is not our habit at Capri."

This novel "habit" is, however, in the

course of being acquired. Our padrone, for instance, besides his native Caprese, could both speak and write English, French, and Italian; but then he had spent two years in England, and had gained some English ideas, which very much added to the comfort of his guests. If he has the sense and firmness to keep to them, to manage his hotel with order, cleanliness, and punctuality, to institute and maintain that conscientious exactitude in all things which it is so difficult to find abroad, especially in hotel-life, where you get no end of useless luxuries, but scarcely any comforts, I can imagine no more delightful and sanitary resting-place than the Quisisana Hotel, Capri.

Especially for that only too numerous and too pathetic class of health-seekers, whose brains being their sole capital, cannot afford to waste money after the fashion of the ordinary tourist, but even while resting must work, and while idling, require to find some intelligent companionship, or some sufficiently

vivid interest to make life tolerable for the time being. To such I would say, Go to Capri. It will never be a fashionable resort, the difficulty of going and coming is too great, but for those who come—and stay there—its advantages are many.

First, its expenses are not ruinous. Life at Capri is, and may easily be kept, simple to a degree. Secondly, it is interesting. The archæologist, the painter, the student of human nature, may find endless subjects of investigation; and the student of any sort will find the one great requisite for brain-work—quiet mixed with amusement. Then, too, the climate is perfection. Even in summer, the height of the little island and its constant exposure to sea-breezes make it never too hot; but from November till May it is truly "an island of the blest," a sort of Avallon,

"Where never wind blows loudly."

—No, I retract; for once I stood, or rather crawled on all fours for safety, along a rocky

path for fear of being blown quite away. But it was a soft, and not unkindly wind. That cruel east and scathing north which wither you up like grass, and pierce arrow-like to the very marrow of your bones, never come here, no more than the continuous drizzly rain, damp, and fog, which make life a burden to so many of us for six months of an English year.

True, Paradise has its weak points. That exquisite greenness, which our humid climate produces, is certainly not found here. Arran, and many of the Scottish islands and Highlands, are for general effects of colour, far more beautiful than Capri; where vegetation withers under the long droughts, which are not uncommon, and against which the only resort of the islanders is to take their patron saint out of his cupboard and institute a special *festa* in his honour. They did so this year, after which ensued such a violent storm that the saint was hurriedly put back again into his cupboard and told "he was

not wanted." And next Sunday the priest preached a special sermon on the occasion, explaining that it had lately been supposed bad weather came from America; it might do so to the English heretics; but all good Catholics must see clearly that the Capri rain came direct from San Costanzo.

However, the good saint never gave us one single drop all the time we stayed there. From early dawn, breaking over the smooth seas, to silent starlight, when, crossing the deserted piazza—all Capri seems asleep by nine p.m.—we used to lean on the low wall and watch the red glow which at night succeeded the white spiral smoke of the beautiful Enemy opposite;—hour after hour of the delicious day the island took a new aspect, each lovelier than the last.

Now, as I look out shivering and hear the howl of the wild June wind, fierce as any equinoctial gale; as I see the mist creeping over the mowing-grass and the rain dropping from the full-leaved trees, I am forced to own

that this dear old England of ours has its faults! To certain delicate people, living in it all the year round is something like being married to a very excellent but acrid wife—we admire all her good qualities, we would not part from her for the world—but if only she were a trifle more even-tempered!

Nor am I faithless to my own land, the land I am glad to live in and hope to die in, if, on this terribly wet day, I think (with an involuntary constriction of the throat and a sigh that I vainly try to suppress) of that lovely sunshiny March day, when, renouncing my donkey, I descended on foot the familiar path to the Marina, and for the last time looked up to the heights of Timberio, and down to the shining waters of the little bay below. Between, were the olive-terraces, the vineyards—scarcely budding yet, the peach-gardens, one mass of blossom, and the quaint little town. Above, on the top of the hill, wound the road to Anacapri. Beyond were the various peaks, each surmounted with some

relic of a Romam emperor or mediæval pirate, who had left here his mark or his name. Stormy times has the little island passed through! yet it looked so sweet, so sunny, the abode of pleasantness and peace.

Our friends, Italian and English, young and old, poor and rich, had either accompanied us down to the beach, or were gathered on the little quay to bid us good-bye—

> "Addio, mia bella Capri—addio, addio,
> Dolce memorie d'un tempo felice."

So sang the wandering vocalist as the boat glided away. (I must confess that he had before sung the same song, with an equally tender expression, only altering the words to "Addio, mia bella *Napoli*," which was a decided mistake.) His voice was very touching, and the scene very sweet,—a scene that, who knows? we may never behold again.

It was weak-minded, but I own that in my last look at Capri, I did not see the beautiful island too clearly.

HOW SHE TOLD A LIE.

HOW SHE TOLD A LIE.

THE three travellers—kind cousin Eva, with her young charges, Cherry and Ruth—were standing on the staircase of the curious old Hôtel de Bourgthéroude, by the Place de la Pucelle, Rouen. That narrow, gloomy little square looked still narrower and gloomier in the drizzle of the dull November day; and the ugly pump in the middle of it, with a still uglier statue on the top, marking the place where Jeanne d'Arc was burnt, had been a sore disappointment to the children. They had come, as enthusiastic little pilgrims, to see the spot where their favourite

heroine died; and Cousin Eva could hardly get them to believe that it was the spot —that the common-looking market-place, where a few ordinary modern market-people were passing and re-passing, had actually been the scene of the cruel deed —that from the very identical windows of those very identical houses, brutal eyes had watched the Maid, standing, with the flames curling round her, clasping the rude cross which some charitable soul pushed towards her.

"Do you remember," Cousin Eva said, "how, at the last moment, she retracted all the false confession of heresy and witchcraft which torture had wrung from her, and exclaimed, 'Yes, my voices were of God.' And how, when she saw the flames approaching her, she shut her eyes, called out once 'Jesus!' dropped her head upon her breast, and that was all—until they raked up a handful of charred bones out of the embers, and threw them into the Seine?"

The children looked grave. At last they did realize it all.

"I wonder what sort of a day it was," whispered Cherry: "dull and gloomy, like to-day, or with a bright blue sunshiny sky? Perhaps she looked up at it before the fire touched her. And perhaps he stood here—just where we stand—the English soldier who cried out, 'We have burnt a saint!'"

"And so she was," said Ruth, with a quiver passing over the eager little face; "a real saint."

"But, Cousin Eva," added Cherry, "why did she ever own to being a witch? and how could she say her voices were not true when she believed they were true? One way or other she must have told a lie."

Miss Cherry was of an argumentative, rather than a sentimental turn. She thought a good deal herself, and liked to make other people think too, so as to enable her to get to the bottom of things. She could never overlook the slightest break in a chain of practical

reasoning; and if she had a contempt in this world, it was for a weak person, or a person who told a lie. This flaw, even in her favourite Maid of Orleans, otherwise so strong and brave, was too much for Cherry to pass over.

"Do you not think," said Cousin Eva, "that it would be possible, under stress of circumstances, to tell a lie—to confess to something one had never done? Bishop Cranmer, for instance. Have you forgotten how he signed a recantation, and then thrust into the flames 'that unworthy right hand?' And Galileo, when forced by the Inquisition to declare the earth stood still, but muttered afterwards, '*E pur si muove.*' Yes, yes," continued she, "one never knows what one may be driven to do till the time comes. The force of torture is very strong. Once upon a time, I remember, I told a lie."

"You told a lie!" echoed Cherry, looking with amazement into the bright, sweet, honest face—rosy-cheeked, blue-eyed, her little cousins

themselves had not more innocent eyes—as clear and as round as a baby's.

"But nobody ever tortured you?" added tender-hearted Ruth, clinging to the kindly hand, which, indeed, she never went far away from in these alarming "foreign parts."

"No, my little girl; the thumb-screws, the rack, and the maiden belong, luckily, to that room in the Tower where we saw them one day; and we are in the nineteenth and not the fifteenth century. Still, even now-a-days a good deal of moral torture can be brought to bear upon one occasionally, especially when one is only a child, as I was then, and I was tried sharply—enough to make me remember it even now—and feel quite sure that if I had been Jeanne d'Arc I should very likely have done exactly as she did! Also I learnt, what I have tried to put into practice ever since, that nothing makes people liars like disbelieving them."

Ruth gave a little tender pressure to the hand she held, while Cherry said proudly,

"You never disbelieved us, and you never need do it! But tell us, Cousin Eva, about the lie you told. Was it denying something you had done, or owning to something you were innocent of, like poor Jeanne d'Arc? Do tell! You know how we like a story."

"What, here, in this pelting rain?" answered Cousin Eva, as she proceeded to investigate from under her umbrella the curious bas-reliefs of the Field of the Cloth of Gold, which still remain in the court of the Hôtel du Bourgthéroude. "No, children; you must wait a more desirable opportunity."

Which, however, was not long in coming. The day brightened—grew into one of those exquisite days which French people call "l'été de St. Martin"—and truly I know nothing like it, except what it most resembles, a sweet, peaceful, contented old age. So Cousin Eva decided to take the children to a place which she had herself once seen and never forgot, the little church on a hill-top, called Notre Dame de Bon Secours.

"Is that the same which Alice sings about in the opera of *Robert le Diable?*" said Cherry and struck up, in her clear young voice—

"'Quand je quittais ma Normandie.'

"Rouen is in Normandy, so of course it was the same—

"'Daigne protéger nos amours,
Notre Dame de Bon Secours.'"

"Very likely it was the same, though you need not sing so loud, Cherry, or the hotel people will hear you," said timid Ruth.

They went. Exceedingly the children enjoyed the stiff climb up the hill, and admired the lovely building, all ablaze with brilliant but harmonious colouring, and the little side-chapels, filled with innumerable votive inscriptions: "A Marie," "Grâces à Marie," "Elle a exaucé mes vœux," &c. Curious, simple, almost childish, it all was, yet touching to those who feel, as Cousin Eva did, that to believe earnestly in anything is better than believing in nothing.

Afterwards they all sat and rested in one of the prettiest resting-places I know, for those that live and move, or for "them that sleep"—the grave-yard on the hill-top, close behind the church of Notre Dame de Bon Secours. From this high point they could see the whole country for miles and miles, the Seine winding through it in picturesque curves. Rouen, with its bridges and streets, distinct as in a map, lay at their right hand, and, rising out of the mass of houses, ethe-realized by the yellow sunset light, were the two spires of the Cathedral and the Church of St. Ouen.

"Can you see the market-place, Cousin Eva? If so, poor Jeanne d'Arc, when she was brought out to die, must have seen this hill, with the church on the top of it; that is, supposing there was a church."

"There might have been, though not this one, which is modern, you see."

"I wonder," continued Cherry, who was always wondering, "if she looked up at it,

and thought it hard that Notre Dame de Bon Secours should not have succoured her; perhaps because, to escape from the heretic English, she had told a lie."

"And that reminds me," added Ruth, who was not given to ethical questions, "that while we sit and rest, we might hear from Cousin Eva about the lie *she* told."

"Yes, yes. Please say, Cousin Eva, was it a big or a little one? Why did you tell it? And was it ever found out?"

"I don't see the difference between big and little falsehoods, my child. A lie is a lie, though sometimes there are extenuating circumstances in the reason for telling it. And once told, the question whether or not it is ever found out, does not matter. My lie never was found out, but it grieved me all the same."

"Will it grieve you to tell about it? I should not like that," said Ruth softly.

"No, dear; because I have long since forgiven myself. I was such a small child, much younger than either of you, and, unlike

you, I had no parents, only an aunt and uncle and a lot of rough cousins, who domineered over me and made me afraid. That was the cause. The sure way to make a child untruthful is to make it afraid. I remember, as if it were yesterday, the shudder of terror that came over me when my eldest cousin clutched me by the shoulder saying, 'Did you do that?'"

"And what had you done?" asked Cherry.

"Nothing, but Will thought I had. We were all digging in our gardens, and he had just found his favourite jessamine plant lying uprooted on the ground. It had been my favourite too, but Will took it from me and planted it in his own garden, where I watched it anxiously, for I was afrald it would die.

"'She did it on purpose,' Will insisted; 'or if not out of revenge, out of pure silliness. Girls are always so silly. Didn't she propose yesterday to dig it up just to see it it had got a root?'

"Which was quite true. I was a very silly little girl, but I meant no harm; I wouldn't for the world have harmed either Will or his jessamine. I told him so, but he would not believe me, nor would any of them. They all stood round, and declared I must have done it. Nobody else had been in the garden, except indeed a dog, who was in the habit of burying his bones there. He was the sinner; but they never thought of him, only of me. And when I denied doing it, they were only the more angry.

"'You know you are telling a lie. And where do little girls go to that tell lies?' cried Will, who sometimes told them himself; but then he was a boy, and it was a rule in that family, a terribly mistaken one, that the boys might do anything, and the girls must always give in to the boys. So when Will looked fiercely at me, repeating, 'You know you did it,' I almost felt as if I really had done it. Unable to find another word, I began to cry.

"'Look here, you children'—he called all the rest children—'Eva has gone and pulled up my jessamine, out of spite, or mischief, or pure silliness. I don't know which, and I don't care. I'd forgive her, if she would confess, but she won't. She keeps on telling lie after lie, and we won't stand children that tell lies. If we punish her, she'll howl, so I propose that until she confesses we all send her to Coventry.'

"'It's a very nice town, but I don't want to go there,' said I, at which I remember they all burst out laughing, and I cried only the more.

"I had no idea what 'sending to Coventry' meant, unless it was like sending to Siberia, which I had lately been reading of, or to the quicksilver mines, where condemned convicts were taken, and where nobody ever lived more than two years. Perhaps there were quicksilver mines at Coventry? A cold shudder of fear ran through me, but I was utterly powerless. I could but die.

"Soon I discovered what my punishment was; and, though not death, it was hard enough. Fancy, children, being treated day after day, and all day long, just as if you were a chair or a table—never taken the least notice of, never answered if you spoke, never spoken to on any account; never played with, petted, or scolded. Completely and absolutely ignored. This was being 'sent to Coventry,' and it was as cruel a punishment as could have been inflicted upon any little girl, especially a sensitive little girl who liked her playfellows, rough as they were, and was very fond of one of them, who was never rough, but always kind and good.

"This was a little boy who lived next door. His parents, like mine, were out in India; nor had he any brothers or sisters. He was just my age, and younger than any of my cousins. So we were the best of friends—Tommy and I. His surname I have forgotten, but I know we always called him

Tommy, and that I loved him dearly. The bitterest pang of all this bitter time was that even Tommy went over to the enemy.

"At first he had been very sorry for me —had tried, all through that holiday Saturday when my punishment began, to persuade me to confess, and escape it; and when he failed —for how could I confess to what I had never done? to an action so mean that I would have been ashamed even to have thought of doing?—then Tommy also sent me to Coventry. On the Sunday, when all 'us children' — we didn't mind grammar much in those days—walked to church together across the fields, and Tommy always walked with me, chattering the whole way, we walked in total silence, for Will's eye was upon him, and even Tommy was afraid. Whatever I said he never answered a single word.

"Then I felt as if all the world were against me—as if it was no use trying to

be good, or telling the truth, since even the truth was regarded as a lie. In short, in my small childish way, I suffered much as poor Jeanne d'Arc must have suffered when she was shut up in her prison at Rouen, called a witch, a deceiver—forsaken of all, and yet promised pardon if she would only confess and own she was a wicked woman, which she knew she was not.

"I was quite innocent, but after three days of being supposed guilty, I ceased to care whether I was guilty or not. I seemed not to care for anything. Since they supposed I was capable of such a mean thing as pulling up a harmless jessamine-root out of spite, what did it matter whether they thought I had told a lie or not? or, indeed, whether I did tell one? which evidently would be much easier than telling the truth, and every day my 'sticking it out,' and persisting in the truth, became more difficult.

"This state of things continued till Wednesday, which was our half-holiday, when my

cousins usually went a long walk or played cricket, and I was sent in to spend the afternoon with Tommy. They were the delight of my life, those long quiet Wednesdays, when Tommy and I went 'mooning about,' dug in our garden, watched our tadpoles—we had a hand-basin full of them, which we kept in the arbour till they developed into myriads of frogs and went hopping about everywhere. But even tadpoles could not charm me now, and I dreaded, rather than longed for, my half-holiday.

"School had been difficult enough, for Tommy and I had the same daily governess; but if, when we played together, he was never to speak to me, what should I do? And his grandmother would be sure to find it out; and she was a prim and rather strict old lady, to whom a child who had been sent to Coventry for telling a lie would be a perfect abhorrence. What could I do? Would it not be better to hide away somewhere, so as to escape going into Tommy's house at all?

Indeed, I almost think some vague thought of running away and hiding myself for ever crossed my mind, when I heard Will calling me.

"He and two of the others were standing at the front door—a terrible Council of Three (like that which used to sentence to death the victims in the Prigioni, which we saw last month at Venice). I felt not unlike a condemned prisoner—one who had been shut up so long that death came almost as a relief—which it must often have been to those poor souls. These three big boys stood over me like judges over a criminal, and Tommy stood beside them looking very sad.

"'Little girl,' said Will in quite a judicial tone, 'we think you have been punished enough to make you thoroughly ashamed of yourself. We wish you to go and play with Tommy as usual; but Tommy could not possibly have you unless you were out of Coventry. We will give you one chance more. Confess that you pulled up the jessamine,

and we'll forgive you, and tell nobody about you; and you shall go and have tea with Tommy just as if nothing had happened. Think—you have only to say one word.'

"'And if I don't say it?'

"'Then,' answered Will, with a solemn and awful expression, 'I shall be obliged immediately to tell everybody everything.'

"That terrible threat—all the more formidable because of its vagueness—quite overcame me. To be set down as a liar or to become one; to be punished as I knew my aunt would punish me on her son's mere statement, for a wrong thing I had never done, or to do a wrong thing, and escaping punishment, go back to my old happy life with my dear Tommy, who stood, the tears in his eyes, awaiting my decision.

"It was a hard strait—too hard for one so young. And Will stood over me, with his remorseless eyes.

"'Well, now; say once for all, did you pull up my jessamine?'

"It was too much. Sullenly—slowly—I made up my mind to the inevitable, and answered, 'Since you will have it so—Yes.' But the instant I had said it, I fell into such a fit of sobbing—almost hysterical screaming—that they were all frightened and ran away.

"Tommy stayed, terrified. He got me away into the arbour as fast as he could. I felt his arms round my neck, and his comforting was very tender, very sweet. But I was long before I stopped crying, and still longer before anything like cheerfulness came into my poor little heart. We played together all the afternoon very affectionately, but in a rather melancholy sort of way, as if we had something on our minds, to which we never made the smallest reference. Tommy was a timid boy, and Will had cowed him into unkindness: but he loved me. I knew he loved me; only, as is often the case, if his love had had a little more courage it would have been all the better for me—perhaps for him, too.

"We spent a peaceful, but rather dull afternoon, and then were summoned in-doors to tea.

"Now tea at Tommy's house was a serious thing. Tommy's grandmother always sat at the table, and looked at us through her spectacles, and talked to us in a formal and dignified manner, asking if we had been good children, had learnt our lessons well, had played together without quarrelling, &c., &c. She was a kind old lady, but she always made us feel that she was an old lady, years upon years older than we, and unable to understand us at all. Consequently, we never did more than answer her questions and hold our tongues. As for telling her anything—our troubles especially—we would as soon have thought of confiding in the Queen, or the Emperor of all the Russias.

"I never opened my lips all tea-time, and at last she noticed it. Also that my eyes were rather red.

"'This little girl looks as if she had been crying. I hope you have not made her cry, Tommy, my dear?'

"Tommy was silent. But I eagerly declared that Tommy had not made me cry. Tommy was never unkind to me.

"'I am glad to hear it, Evangeline (she always gave me my full name); and I hope you too are a good child, who is never in mischief, and above all never tells lies. If I were not quite sure of that, I could not allow Tommy to play with you.'

"She looked us full in the face as if she saw through and through us—which she did not, being very short-sighted—yet I felt myself tremble in every limb. As for Tommy, he just glanced at me, and glanced away again, turning crimson to the very roots of his hair, but he said nothing.

"What would have happened next, I cannot tell: we waited in terror, holding one another's hands under the table-cloth. But mercifully at that very instant the old lady was fetched

to speak with some one, and we two children had to finish our tea alone.

"It almost choked us—me, at any rate. But soon as ever it was over, and Tommy and I found ourselves safe out in the garden, I flung my arms round his neck and told him all.

"And Tommy believed me. No matter whether the others did or not, Tommy believed me—at last; Tommy sympathised with me, comforted me, thought I was not so very wicked even though I had told a lie, but not the one I was accused of telling. Tommy wept with me over all I had suffered, and promised that, though perhaps it was better to let the matter rest now, if such a thing were to happen again, he would not be afraid of Will or of anybody, but would stand up for me 'like a man.'"

"And did he do it?" asked Cherry with slight incredulity in her tone.

"He had not the opportunity. A week after this he was suddenly sent for to join

his parents abroad, and I never saw my friend Tommy any more."

"But did you never hear of him? Is he alive still? He must be a very old gentleman by this time."

"Very. No doubt a father—possibly even a grandfather," replied Cousin Eva, smiling.

Cherry blushed. "I didn't mean that, since he was barely as old as you, and you are certainly not a grandmother. But I want to hear more of Tommy. Is he married?"

"I really cannot say. The last time I heard of him was ten years ago, when he was living somewhere abroad. I rather think at Shanghai. He was not married then."

"I wish," whispered Ruth solemnly, "I wish he would come back to England and marry you."

Cousin Eva laughed. "There might be two opinions on that question, you know. But, oh! my children, when you are married, and have children of your own, remember my story. If ever a poor little thing looks up in

your face saying, 'I didn't do that,' believe it. If it sobs out, 'I'm not naughty,' don't call it naughty. Give it the benefit of the doubt. Have patience, take time, and whatever you do, don't make it afraid. Cowards are always liars; and of the two evils it is less harmful to believe a lie than to doubt a person who is speaking the truth."

"I think so too," said Cherry sagely. "Remember poor Jeanne d'Arc."

"And poor Cousin Eva," added Ruth, kissing her hand.

And so, in the fading twilight, the three rose up together, and went down the hill from Notre Dame de Bon Secours.

A RUINED PALACE.

A RUINED PALACE.

We had decided on a "day out"—out of Paris, with its noise and confusion; which, for the first time, we had found endurable. It reached only as a distant murmur our pleasant City of Refuge—where the nights were as quiet as the days, and every morning we could actually see a bit of sunrise—pink or lilac clouds floating over the chimney-tops—(ah! happily innocent of the abominable coal smoke of London)—of the Rue Boissy d'Anglas, and the Faubourg St. Honoré.

A tranquil nook, though in the very heart of Paris. Still, we already sighed for the country: a breath of fresh air, and the sight of the fading leaves, before they had all

dropped off. So we crossed to the Place de la Concorde and waited for a "tram"—(how funny the word looks—"tramways"—both in France and Italy!)—determining to take that simple route to Sèvres and St. Cloud.

We English make, I think, many mistakes in travelling. In the first place, some of us are too shy, and a good many more too self-conceited, to attempt foreign tongues; forgetting that to be in a country where you cannot, or will not speak the language, is as foolish as going to see views with your eyes bandaged up. You may pass easily from hotel to hotel, pleased that everybody pays you the attention of addressing you in your own good English tongue; but of the real life of the country you are in, you remain as utterly ignorant as if you were blind. To enjoy travelling you must put your prejudices in your pocket—your dignity too, sometimes, and place yourself in sympathy with the people. Depend upon it, they will seldom fail, in

France and Italy almost never, to show sympathy with you.

This I say, remembering the amount of politeness, and really valuable information, that we got out of a young *ouvrier*—we guessed his trade from his rough hands, but should never have done it from his manner—who sat beside us on the top of the "tram," as we took the long cold drive by the banks of the Seine, the direct road to Versailles. A commonplace, ugly road, evidently full of busy prosperity. How strange to think of the days, so few winters back, when all trade was at a stand-still, and along this road from Versailles to Paris was incessant marching and fighting—between French and Germans, and worse, between French and French! How terrible must have been those winter mornings when the men of a household started off to their awful day's work—knowing for certain that many of them would not come back at night! These little white crosses which, for the first year or two after the siege, could be

traced everywhere, in by-roads, market-gardens, open spaces of green, marking where soldiers had fallen and been buried as they fell, have they all been removed? We almost hoped so; but it will be long years before Paris ceases to remember them.

Nevertheless, the extent to which the city has revived is perfectly wonderful. Passing along this road, so lately full of fighting armies, everything looked bright and neat, as if after centuries of prosperity and peace. And when we stopped at Sèvres, and went over the celebrated china manufactory, there was no evidence of anything but luxury on the one hand, and on the other the intelligent industry which provides for and benefits by it. Not a trace of aught painful, of those revolutions which we have almost come to believe the normal condition of France—except, indeed, a magnificent milk-pail, once at Le Petit Trianon, and used there by the hapless royal "shepherdess," Marie Antoinette; also a statuette or two of the first

Napoleon. Of the later Bonapartes, Emperor, Empress, Prince Impérial, all traces seemed to be as completely swept away as if they belonged to the time of Charlemagne. France has certainly a *grand talent pour oublier.*

Yet how clever she is; how prudent, economical, industrious! and how gay through it all—innocently gay! Especially her bourgeois class, whom one meets in omnibuses, second-class railway carriages, and country streets. A more respectable class does not exist. Monsieur and madame—only I ought to put madame first, for she evidently manages the family—how domestic they look out arm-in-arm on a fête day, in their best clothes, with their children beside them! How pleasantly satisfied they are with themselves; how polite to all the world, even to foreigners! The trouble they will take to understand you—to answer your questions; to put you on your right road; often going half-a-street's length to do it! I wish some of our saturnine Britons would take a lesson—in good things,

not bad—from the much-abused Frenchman.

But we did not come to Sèvres to moralise, especially on this lovely day, so warm that we might have thought it June, save for the heap of dead November leaves under our feet, and the brilliant tints that mingled with the still vivid green of the forest of St. Cloud. In England one would call it a wood, but here it is a forest, though of the most civilized kind—a sort of Rosherville Gardens, evidently—where the bourgeoisie of Paris had been accustomed to spend many a happy day. Dotted here and there we noticed closed refreshment booths and piles of rickety chairs, which, on Sundays and fête days, had no doubt been well filled all through the summer.

But it was winter now. The pleasure-seekers had vanished like flies. Only one group, playing quoits or bowls, or something, were heard enjoying themselves on a bit of level green opposite the dried-up waterfall.

The sad point of that day was that everything seemed dried-up, or shut-up, or pulled down. All the way from Sèvres to St. Cloud we scarcely met a creature; and, arrived there, we could find not a soul about, even to show us our way to the palace.

"We must see it," said the only one of our party who had been here before, who dilated on its exceeding beauty, and the fine view from its terrace; though she had had great difficulty in getting admission. "But that was in the second Empire. St. Cloud had just been rebuilt at great expense; the Empress liked it, and the little Prince Impérial was constantly here. I remember seeing the model railway his father had made for him in the garden, where he used to play for hours, like any other good little boy. Then almost nobody was allowed into the palace, but I hear it is all open now."

Alas! only too open. When we came upon it face to face, this ancient, re-modernised Palace of St. Cloud—what a piteous sight it

was! Through its rows of empty windows—eyeless sockets—the daylight peered; its one remaining pair of shutters persistently flapped in the wind. Inside, half-destroyed staircases clung to the walls, where fragments of blackened paper and gilt decorations still hung. But not a roof remained, not a chamber, not a floor. Fire and fighting had done their work. The outside walls remained; the interior was a total wreck. A slight wooden barrier, which anyone could have stepped over, alone kept out the adventurous and intrusive public from this palace—a ruined palace; but the ruin was that of destruction, without the beauty of age, or the sanctity of natural decay.

We ascended the terrace, obeying a strict injunction "not to pluck the flowers," the half-dozen stunted chrysanthemums, which were all that remained of what must once have been a carefully kept garden. Now it was totally neglected. Sitting down on a half-rotten bench we looked upon the view.

What a view! All Paris lay spread out below like a map. We could distinctly trace the long lines of streets, with the Arc de Triomphe crowning all. Above, were the two towers of Notre-Dame, the Trocadero, and the gilded dome of the Invalides glittering in the sun.

Paris is scarcely a picturesque city—not to be compared with Rouen, Edinburgh, Florence, Rome, or even London, if one could see that immense area in a bird's-eye view. But it looked well to-day, even to its commonplace environs. There was a wooded hill on our right, with a large building on its summit: we almost doubted if this were not Versailles, and put the question to two wandering youths in clerical dress—the only living creatures here besides ourselves. The elder, a big lad of about nineteen, with a pleasant, intelligent face, stopped to explain that the building we had seen was an orphanage, managed by a religious order, to which, I think, he said he belonged. He gave us the fullest information,

statistical and otherwise, about it; and then talked of St. Cloud, lamenting bitterly that it was not Prussians but Frenchmen who had caused this cruel ruin. He talked so pleasantly and so long that his companion had to remind him how their three hours' leave of absence was fast slipping away, whereupon the two took off their caps, right off their heads, gathered their black gowns round them, and departed. Poor young priests! with their air of honest cheerfulness—like boys out for a holiday—we wondered what their future would be, especially considering the religious crisis which France is now going through, and the end of which who can foresee?

For, some days after, we saw a curious sight. The streets of a country town in Normandy were crowded with people, escorting half-a-dozen Capuchins, who, after barricading themselves for two days against the secular power, were at last forced to quit their monastery. Each monk was supported by two of the town's-people, carrying enormous

bouquets; women threw other bouquets out of windows. The worldly goods of the monastery —a few canvas bags piled on a hand-cart and a forlorn-looking pony—were viewed with deep interest; and the three gendarmes who rode gloomily after were assailed with deep groans. As for the victims, poor souls, they looked dazed and stupid, or smiled blankly at the sympathetic throng.

"It is all the Government's doing; but what could you expect from such *canaille?*" muttered a stander-by. "To turn the brethren out when they never harmed anybody, and sometimes did a deal of good! And see, how old they are!"

Yes, "old and foolish," like King Lear, or Rip Van Winkle; for they had a look of having been buried for half a century or so, and dug up again to be turned adrift in abject helplessness upon this unknown modern world. One could not help being sorry for them, but less sorry than for those two young fellows at St. Cloud, whose merry faces

belied their priest's dress, as they went sturdily on their way. What excellent citizens, husbands, and fathers of families were here lost to France and to the world! Perhaps the "*crise religieuse*" may have its advantages after all.

The sun-gleams began to melt away from the brilliant dome of the Invalides, and a chill wind crept upwards from the forest of St. Cloud.

"We ought to be going homewards, but there used to be a finer view still: and there was a curious place called 'the Lantern of Diogenes.' I wonder if this old woman knows anything about it."

She was a poor old creature, carrying a heavy bundle of faggots—yellow, wrinkled, toothless—with a skin like leather, and a cavernous voice. But she answered with the politeness that is never wanting in a French peasant—"*Plait-il?*" and curved her hand over her deaf ear, so as to catch what madame was saying. No; she knew nothing of the

Lantern of Diogenes, of any sort of view. "There is the palace," pointing to it with a skinny finger; "but I do not know anything else. All is so changed—so changed!" And feebly shaking her old head, she took up her bundle and tottered away.

Yet she must have seen it all. The old palace as it looked in the days of the First Empire; then the splendours of the Second Empire, and its downfall; more revolutions; foreign and internecine war; fire, bombardment, and the ruined palace as it looked now; destroyed, as the young priests had indignantly told us, not by the Germans, but by the French themselves. Change, indeed! nothing but change!

"We are the laughing-stock of Europe," said a French gentleman to me some days after, with great bitterness. Not exactly so, while so many noble hearts remain in France: but most truly she is the puzzle and the pity of Europe.

The entrance of St. Cloud is really beautiful.

We stood admiring the fine façade, reflected into the water—artificially made—which comes to the very palace doors. This part of it had suffered least. The great gates, shutting up nothing, were firmly closed, as if it were an inhabited palace still. But it looked so dreary, so unutterably desolate.

At this moment we caught the tramp of feet and the shrill notes of that horrible, ear-piercing noise which the French call "military music." We watched the regiment pass—mere lads many of them, with dull, phlegmatic faces, as if each had "*tiré son sort*," and submitted to a conscript's destiny, but without the slightest military ardour or enthusiasm. Is it really so? Yet Frenchmen can fight, and have proved it. Has "*la gloire*" become now a mere name? It seemed almost so, as they marched lazily by—rough, untidy-looking fellows, without any of the briskness and smartness of our British "line." Not one of them glanced up at the ruined palace, so lately made a ruin by men like themselves, who doubtless are ready

for the same work again, did they get the same chance. Revolution; nothing but revolution. As they say, any week anything may happen in France—except what is expected to happen.

It was all so sad—so infinitely sad—that almost the brightest bit of it was the recollection of that poor boy, who used to play with his mock railway in the palace gardens, but who, exiled and homeless, managed to make himself a home in English hearts, and died with Englishmen in Zululand—died like a hero, with all his wounds in front, so that the last of the Bonapartes was not unworthy the first.

As the soldiers marched away the sun set, a heavy, black cloud rose up behind the ruined palace, and large thunder drops began to fall. But higher up, the sky was still intensely bright and clear, and the last swallows of the year went skimming through it, almost out of sight, like freed souls, far above all the bitterness and turmoil of this world.

Perhaps, after all, it was better for that poor boy that he died in his youth, beloved, honoured, and mourned, than lived to be the curse of France, as, however unwittingly, he might have been.

So adieu to the ruined Palace of St. Cloud, with all its historical memories, and its infinite suggestions of lost lives, lost hopes, lost dynasties. It must be so. In this world, and especially in France, there is nothing immutable but mutability.

THE END.

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